

# **JOHN F. CAHLAN: FIFTY YEARS IN JOURNALISM AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

Interviewee: John F. Cahlan

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Interviewer: Jamie Coughtry

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## **Description**

When John Francis Cahlan first arrived in Las Vegas in 1929 he could legitimately claim that he was older than the sleepy railroad community founded in 1905. A native of Reno, he was born to Albert and Marion Cahlan in 1902, the youngest of two sons. John Cahlan attended schools in Carson City and Reno, graduated from the University of Nevada with a journalism degree, and worked at the Nevada State Journal before his memorable airplane flight to Las Vegas to find employment with his brother, Al, at the Evening Review.

Cahlan was a pioneer in the making of modern Las Vegas. He certainly witnessed, and generally participated in, the major events, actions and activities which transformed the isolated desert town into a world-class tourist resort and metropolitan center in the American Southwest. During his career in journalism, Cahlan was a town booster par excellence; the local news printed in—and sometimes ignored by—the Review-Journal often reflected his enthusiastic pro-growth views on the economic development of Las Vegas.

In this oral history, recorded in 1986, John Cahlan has much to say about the impact and effects of the construction of Hoover Dam, the legislation of gambling, World War II, Bugsy Siegel and organized crime, the Atomic Energy Commission and above-ground nuclear tests, and the introduction of corporate gaming upon the Clark County seat of government. The dynamic of the local political and economic leadership is discussed as it evolved and expanded over some fifty years. John Cahlan's conservative views of racial and labor relations are also treated in their respective social, political, and economic contexts. Of particular interest is Cahlan's assessment of the relationship between the Age, the Sun and the Review-Journal, as southern Nevada's competing newspapers with their distinctly differing influence on public opinion and public policy.

The public-spirited newspaper man also personally contributed to the life and welfare of the community and state. He helped to found the Junior Chamber of Commerce and Hellsdorado celebration, served as assistant municipal judge and a juvenile officer for Clark County, stimulated interest in and support for Nellis Air Force Base, and, as a legislative lobbyist, worked closely with Secretary of State John Koontz to introduce and pass a bill establishing the State Archives in Carson City in 1965.

While by no means a power broker in the decision-making affecting the development of the Las Vegas valley, John Cahlan, as a prominent journalist and town booster, was an influential figure. His oral history gives the reader valuable insights into how the "entertainment capital of the world" came to be.



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AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

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MADE POSSIBLE BY A GRANT FROM THE  
NEVADA DEPARTMENT OF MUSEUMS AND HISTORY

An Oral History Conducted by Jamie Coughtry  
Edited by Jamie Coughtry

University of Nevada Oral History Program

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# CONTENTS

Preface to the Digital Edition	ix
Original Preface	xi
Introduction	xiii
Program Director's Note	xv
1. Growing Up in Reno, 1902-1920	1
2. Studying at the University of Nevada, 1920-1926	35
3. The Las Vegas Review-Journal in the 1930s	43
4. Las Vegas in the 1930s	53
5. The Construction of Boulder Dam and Boulder City: Some Social Consequences for Las Vegas	79
6. The Review-Journal in the 1940s	95
7. World War II Developments: Nellis Air Force Base and Basic Magnesium, Incorporated	103
8. The Emergence of a Black Neighborhood in West Las Vegas, 1940s-1950s	121

9. Service on the University of Nevada Board of Regents, 1947-1951	133
10. Organized Labor and Clark County Politics, 1940s-1950s	143
11. Promoting Las Vegas in the 1940s and 1950s	151
12. The Emergence of a Casino Dominated Economy, 1930-1950	173
13. The Kefauver Committee Hearings and the Regulation of Casino Gambling	195
14. Las Vegas Journalism in the 1950s: Don Reynolds and the Review-Journal; Hank Greenspun and the Sun	205
15. Covering the Nevada Nuclear Test Site in the 1950s	221
16. Observations on Nevada Politics and Political Figures, 1930s-1950s	231
17. Some Thoughts on the Provision of Water for Las Vegas	253
18. The Old Order Passes: Reflections on the Nature of True Nevadans and Changes in the Las Vegas Community	259
19. Epilogue	267
Photographs	271
Original Index: For Reference Only	277



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## PREFACE TO THE DIGITAL EDITION

Established in 1964, the University of Nevada Oral History Program (UNOHP) explores the remembered past through rigorous oral history interviewing, creating a record for present and future researchers. The program's collection of primary source oral histories is an important body of information about significant events, people, places, and activities in twentieth and twenty-first century Nevada and the West.

The UNOHP wishes to make the information in its oral histories accessible to a broad range of patrons. To achieve this goal, its transcripts must speak with an intelligible voice. However, no type font contains symbols for physical gestures and vocal modulations which are integral parts of verbal communication. When human speech is represented in print, stripped of these signals, the result can be a morass of seemingly tangled syntax and incomplete sentences—totally verbatim transcripts sometimes verge on incoherence. Therefore, this transcript has been lightly edited.

While taking great pains not to alter meaning in any way, the editor may have removed false starts, redundancies, and the “uhs,” “ahs,” and other noises with which speech is often liberally sprinkled; compressed some passages which, in unaltered form, misrepresent the chronicler's meaning; and relocated some material to place information in its intended context. Laughter is represented with [laughter] at the end of a sentence in which it occurs, and ellipses are used to indicate that a statement has been interrupted or is incomplete...or that there is a pause for dramatic effect.

As with all of our oral histories, while we can vouch for the authenticity of the interviews in the UNOHP collection, we advise readers to keep in mind that these are remembered pasts, and we do not claim that the recollections are entirely free of error. We can state, however, that the transcripts accurately reflect the oral history recordings on which they were based. Accordingly, each transcript should be approached with the

same prudence that the intelligent reader exercises when consulting government records, newspaper accounts, diaries, and other sources of historical information. All statements made here constitute the remembrance or opinions of the individuals who were interviewed, and not the opinions of the UNOHP.

In order to standardize the design of all UNOHP transcripts for the online database, most have been reformatted, a process that was completed in 2012. This document may therefore differ in appearance and pagination from earlier printed versions. Rather than compile entirely new indexes for each volume, the UNOHP has made each transcript fully searchable electronically. If a previous version of this volume existed, its original index has been appended to this document for reference only. A link to the entire catalog can be found online at <http://oralhistory.unr.edu/>.

For more information on the UNOHP or any of its publications, please contact the University of Nevada Oral History Program at Mail Stop 0324, University of Nevada, Reno, NV, 89557-0324 or by calling 775/784-6932.

Alicia Barber  
Director, UNOHP  
July 2012

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## ORIGINAL PREFACE

The University of Nevada Oral History Program (UNOHP) engages in systematic interviewing of persons who can provide firsthand accounts or descriptions of events, people and places that are the raw material of Nevada history. The products of this research are the tapes of the interviews and their transcriptions.

In themselves, oral history interviews are not history. However, they often contain valuable primary source material, as useful in the process of historiography as the written sources to which historians customarily have turned. While the properly conducted oral history is a reliable source, verifying the accuracy of all of the statements made in the course of an interview would require more time and money than the UNOHP's operating budget permits. The program can vouch that the statements were made, but it cannot attest that they are free of error. Accordingly, oral histories should be approached with the same prudence that the reader exercises when consulting government records, newspaper

accounts, diaries and other sources of historical information.

It is the policy of the UNOHP to produce transcripts that are as close to verbatim as possible, but some alteration of the text is generally both unavoidable and desirable. When human speech is captured in print, the result can be a morass of tangled syntax, false starts and incomplete sentences, sometimes verging on incoherence. No type font contains symbols for the physical gestures and diverse vocal modulations which are integral parts of communication through speech. Experience shows that, in the absence of any orthography for such non-verbal communication, totally verbatim transcripts are often largely unreadable and therefore a waste of the resources expended in their production. Therefore, while keeping alterations to a minimum the UNOHP will, in preparing a text:

a. generally delete false starts, redundancies and the uhs, ahs and other noises with which speech is often liberally sprinkled;

b. occasionally compress language that would be confusing to the reader in unaltered form;

c. rarely shift a portion of a transcript to place it in its proper context; and

d. enclose in [brackets] explanatory information or words that were not uttered but have been added to render the text intelligible.

There will be readers who prefer to take their oral history straight, without even the minimal editing that occurred in the production of this text; they are directed to the tape recording.

Copies of all or part of this work and the tape recording from which it is derived are available from:

The University of Nevada  
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University of Nevada, Reno 89557-0044  
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## INTRODUCTION

When John Francis Cahlan first arrived in Las Vegas in 1929 he could legitimately claim he was older than the sleepy railroad community founded in 1905. A native of Reno, he was born to Albert and Marion Cahlan in 1902, the youngest of two sons. John Cahlan attended schools in Carson City and Reno, graduated from the University of Nevada with a journalism degree, and worked at the Nevada State Journal before his memorable airplane flight to Las Vegas to find employment with his brother, Al, at the Evening Review.

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views on the economic development of Las Vegas.

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community and state. He helped to found the Junior Chamber of Commerce and Helldorado celebration, served as assistant municipal judge and a juvenile officer for Clark County, stimulated interest and support for Nellis Air Force Base, and, as a legislative lobbyist, worked closely with Secretary of State John Koontz to introduce and pass a bill establishing the State Archives in Carson City in 1965.

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Guy Louis Rocha  
August 7, 1987

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## PROGRAM DIRECTOR'S NOTE

In 1968 Mary Ellen Glass, then the director of the University of Nevada Oral History Program (UNOHP), conducted a series of 6 interviews with John F. Cahlan. These were transcribed, edited and bound as *Reminiscences of a Reno and Las Vegas Newspaperman, University Regent and Public-Spirited Citizen*. In 1986 the UNOHP received a grant from the Nevada State Museum to begin a systematic effort to record the twentieth century history of southern Nevada. John Cahlan's papers recently had been deposited with the State Museum, and it seemed appropriate to commence our work with an update of Mr. Cahlan's 18-year old oral history. Once the project was underway it became clear that something more than an update was in order. Mr. Cahlan, the UNOHP's advisory board and I were confident that a comprehensive treatment of Cahlan's life, career and involvement in the development of Clark County need not merely replicate the earlier oral history, but could complement it. I believe that Ms. Coughtry and Mr. Cahlan have been successful in their

pursuit of that goal. While there is a certain amount of unavoidable redundancy in this later work, there is also much that is both original and provocative. Readers interested in a sketch of life in Reno, circa 1910-1929, and a knowledgeable insider's account of the development of Las Vegas since 1929 would be well advised to consult both oral histories as well as the Cahlan papers.

R.T. King  
UNOHP Director  
October, 1987







JOHN F. CAHLAN  
CA. 1960



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## GROWING UP IN RENO, 1902-1920

John Francis Cahlan: I have researched the Cahlan end of the family, and I know that my Grandfather John Cahlan was born on the Irish Sea. Yes, on the Irish sea, on an Irish boat, with an Irish captain; so I guess I have a few Irish tentacles in my family. My grandfather's family came over here around 1852 and landed in New York City, but went on to a community named Roundout, New York, which I understand was a haven for Irish immigrants. He remained there until he was 5 or 6 years old. Then he went to Illinois to live with an uncle.

Grandfather had 2 brothers: J. T. Cahlan, and I've forgotten the other one's initials. They went to the Civil War and never came back, so I lost track of that. My grandfather joined the team behind Zebulon Pike coming across the prairies. Zebulon Pike was the one who discovered Pike's Peak. My grandfather was with the wagon train behind him.

Grandfather was a young man at that time, and not married. He was just adventuresome, and everybody was going west, so he joined with them. He came over the Oregon Trail

until he got around what now is Salt Lake City, and then he branched off and went down to Marysville, California. He picked up a couple of animals—they were mules or oxen—and a freight wagon and was freighting from Marysville to Sacramento. They had a large flood on the American River, and the flood washed away all of his assets. He went from Marysville to Reno.

From Reno, Grandfather opened a freighting business to Virginia City, and was hauling freight over the Geiger Grade from Reno to Virginia City. One of the stories that he told me was that during the heavy snowstorm—I think it was 1875; it closed off Virginia City and closed off all the roads for about 3 months—he was the first freighter to break through into Virginia City with a load of flour. He took it to the man he had been selling his goods to in Virginia City, and the man told him he couldn't pay for it. My grandfather says, "Well, that's all right. I'll get it the next time I come up."

This man said, "No, I can't pay for it, but I'll give you a deed to some land in Reno."

And my grandfather said, “No, I’ll get it later. It’s all right.”

The deed that he wanted to give to my grandfather was from the Truckee River to Second Street, going up Virginia Street to Second Street, over from Virginia Street to Sierra Street, and from Sierra Street back to the river: the very heart of the city of Reno. But he didn’t take it, and that’s the last we ever heard of it.

I don’t know at which point he met my grandmother. She was a schoolteacher. Her name was Charlotte Farley, I believe. She died and he married another Charlotte, and I don’t remember what her name was.

My grandfather moved from Reno to Susanville, out in the valley up there, and was quite active in civic affairs and became president of the Lassen County Bank. I can’t tell you the year he died, but I know I was in the fifth grade in Reno. Of course, we went to the funeral.

*Jamie Coughtry: You seem to know a lot about your paternal grandparents. Is this a result of your own research, or are these things that you discussed with your grandfather?*

My grandfather didn’t like to talk about himself, and he never told me any great amount of stories. But my 2 aunts—Geneva Cahlan and Lena Cahlan, both of whom were born in Susanville—and I talked a lot of times about finding out the history of the Cahlan family.

From my teens on I became interested in trying to find out something about the Cahlan family. One time when I was in Washington, D.C., I went to the Library of Congress and found a short biography of my grandfather. Most of the stuff that I got out of it, my aunts didn’t know anything about. The

book was written about the Lassen County pioneers. Where the interview took place or with whom, I’m not certain, but the book is in the Library of Congress in Washington. It answered quite a few questions as to where we came from.

I don’t remember my maternal grandfather, because during the lax period up in Virginia City he went to the White Pine County diggings, which were supposed to be in the same era as the Virginia City mining boom. He was a miner. He was a hoisting engineer, truly. And he went to the White Pine area, and then he went up to Butte, Montana, where he was engaged in mining. As I have said, he was a hoisting engineer. He was on the job during a fire up at Virginia City which took a great many lives. He worked 48 hours straight hoisting the cage up and down.

Both my maternal grandparents were from New Hampshire. They had lived in the same town, but they didn’t know each other in New Hampshire. My maternal grandfather was Francis Edmunds, and my grandmother was Gertrude, and I’ve forgotten her maiden name.

*Do you know what brought your grandmother to Nevada?*

Yes. She had a job teaching school. I’m not sure, but I think she taught in the big school that’s still up there in Virginia City—the Fourth Ward School. My grandparents were married in Virginia City. Then he followed the miners to White Pine and Butte. He died in Butte, Montana. I didn’t know him; I don’t know that I ever met him. My maternal grandmother later came and lived with us when I was going to college.

*Did you ever speak with her about the family?*

Not too much. They were very reticent to talk about themselves. I do remember that my grandmother was very straight-laced. She was a typical New Hampshire, Granite State native. She had 3 daughters and she couldn't very well understand how to raise a boy and we used to get in some definite arguments as I got older—just merely family arguments. We would be doing something she didn't like, and we would argue back.

I can remember that we used to sit on a wood box there. We had a big wood box in the kitchen. We used to sit on the wood box and beat our feet against it and ask my mother when the food was going to be put on the table. We'd sing some songs that she thought were very risqué. Now they would probably be accepted in any church in the country, but she was very straightlaced.

*Was she a disciplinarian in the family?*

No, she wasn't. I think she tried to do a little disciplining, but my father was rather stubborn. He cut her out of the raising of the kids. We were his kids and not anybody else's.

On their side of the family they had 3 daughters: Marion—my mother—Amy and Alice. Alice married Will Sauer, who ranched out in the Washoe Valley on the ranch that was owned by Steen. He made a lot of money off the stuff they make atomic bombs out of. Will Sauer operated that ranch. It was just south of Bowers Mansion. The house is still there. We frequently went out there for weekends or vacations.

Amy—I guess I shouldn't put this in the public eye, but it's all right—fell in love with a preacher by the name of Duncan in Butte, Montana. Their affair created such a stir that he was released from his pastorate up there. They went back to Minneapolis.

He later became mayor of Minneapolis, and she remained as his secretary. After I came to Las Vegas, he died, and Amy came down here to live with my mother. Amy died of a heart attack several years after she came to Las Vegas. She was the black sheep of the family. We never talked about Aunt Amy very often.

My father's name was Albert Wallace Cahlan, and my mother's name was Marion Edmunds. They met in college. She was in the normal school. They used to have a normal school at the University of Nevada—a 2-year normal course which gave you access to a teaching certificate in the state of Nevada. She and my father went to the university together, and they fell in love and were married. I think that the Cahlan-Edmunds family sent more people to the University of Nevada in Reno than any other family in the state of Nevada. All 4 of my aunts went to school there, and a lot of their kids went to school there.

I was born in Reno on 25 August 1902, at 518 North Center Street, in a house that belonged to my grandmother and in which we were living at the time. My grandparents had gone to Butte, Montana, and they sort of leased it to their daughter. It was originally, I think, about a 3-room house. As my brother and I came along, other bedrooms were built in back, so it was more or less of a barn-like construction. It was a very comfortable house; it was a loving house. My mother and father paid attention to us and to what we were doing during the time we were going to school.

From Reno we moved to Carson City, and we rented a house on Carson Street and Fleischmann Way. It was a 2-story house. It must have been on the estate of some wealthy person. I never did find out who it belonged to.

At that time electricity was just being presented for use in the home. I can remember

a chandelier in the living room that had not only electricity but gas installation. So if the electricity went off, we had gas lights. This was a fun house! It had a very large lawn, and the lawn sloped down onto the street. We used to play in the yard—have our friends come over and play. It was a very comfortable house.

We moved from there to a house . . . I think it was on Minnesota Street. It was about a block and a half away from the grammar school, or the schoolhouse, in Carson. We lived there for the rest of the time that we were in Carson City. I can remember that we used to have our own refrigeration system there. We had a porch that extended the width of the house, and my father hung a large piece of canvas across the roof slant. We'd water that about 2:00 in the afternoon and keep watering it, and the evaporation would cool off the porch where my brother and I used to sleep in the summertime.

Then when we came back to Reno, we lived in a house that was called a flat. We rented the lower part of the house. It was a 2-story house . . . there were living quarters on the bottom and living quarters on the top. My brother and I slept out in the yard in the summer. There was an alleyway or a runway between the house and the fence, and it was covered with vines, so we could sleep out there without any problem.

Then back in Reno, we moved into another flat on Walnut Street, just off Sierra. Then we moved up onto Lake Street—Ninth and Lake Street—into an old house, not falling down by any means, but it was an older house. We moved from there over to 815 University Avenue into one of the houses that my father built when I was going to college.

*Was that the first house that your family owned?*

Yes. We moved around. And, as I say, it was a very congenial household.

*Do you think that moving frequently was common at the time?*

I would judge so, yes, except for people over on the south side of the river, because the Truckee River separated the Reno elite from the ordinary person. The elite lived on the south side; all the peons lived on the far side.

*Did you always have things like plumbing in your houses?*

We always had inside plumbing, although it was drained mostly into cesspools. There were no treatment plants at that time. If I can remember correctly, I think we had a pump in the kitchen—hand pump. We pumped the water from a well. I'm not sure whether that was in Reno or in Washoe Valley, where my aunt and uncle had their home.

I can remember that in most of the houses that I lived in Reno there were wood and coal stoves. All the cooking and heating was done by wood. In the house at 815 University Avenue we also had an old pot-bellied stove in the living room, and between the 2 of them we got a pretty good circulation of warmth.

In the house at 518 North Center Street we had an Indian who was very, very true to the family. I mean she was just practically a part of the family. She worked there until we went to Carson City, I think—1908. She didn't live with us. She lived at the old Indian camp and came . . . I don't remember whether it was 3 times a week . . . but anyway, she was there to do the washing. We also used to have some odd jobs done by other Indians . . . mowing the lawn... this was when I was very young, of course.



*Did Indians ever live in the home as domestic help?*

No.

*Do you remember the Indian woman's name?*

I am toying with the name Mattie. ..but my wife Florence had a gal down here in Las Vegas by the name of Mattie, who was a Negress. Anyway, the woman in Reno was one of the good Indians. I mean by that, really willing to work. She'd scrub the floors and do the washing and all the heavier kinds of housework. She'd just come there and work, and that was it. She didn't let anybody interrupt her work.

*Would she care for you children, as well?*

Oh, yes. She was very trustworthy.

*Did you have an affection for her?*

Yes, very definitely. She was just part of the family. She had a son, and she used to bring her son . . . I guess he was 3 or 4—about my age—and we played together. But the kid died, and she wouldn't come back to the house after he died. She was just so grief stricken that every time she saw me she thought of her son. So she just quit coming.

*Would you say your family was working class, middle class . . . ?*

Working class. I can remember my father coming home every Saturday evening with a little envelope about 2 inches wide and about 6 or maybe 10 inches deep, and he'd open it up and pour out gold coins. My mother would take so many gold coins for her house duties,

and my father'd take what was left over for his enjoyment.

My mother used to do a lot of canning. She'd can peaches and can tomatoes and anything that was available for preserving. There were several grocery stores, and we used to have a Chinaman who had one of those things that they put around their necks and had baskets on each side of their body. They used to come around during the canning season. They sold any kind of fruits, vegetables . . . They probably were growing their own. There was quite a Chinese colony in Reno. It was accepted, and it was part of the community.

There were times that various people would come to the door and ask if anybody was interested in any of their grocery stuff. But it was like so many other of the small towns—you did what you had to do. I mean, if you had to grow some vegetables to supply your family, you grew vegetables. Of course, the meat was a different thing. You got your meat from the meat markets. I would usually run over to the Humphrey Market, which was over on Sierra Street. They provided us—as youngsters—with a baseball diamond, which was across the street. They owned the lot. That's where we used to play baseball.

During the deer season everybody would go out—not everybody, but a lot of the people—and hunt deer. But my father was not what they called a sportsman. He neither fished nor hunted. We were not a game-eating family.

Of course, washing machines and microwave ovens and that sort of stuff came along after I had long since left. I can remember my mother or Mattie ironing with the old irons that you heated over the stove. They had a regular iron on the bottom, and you had an iron part on the top of it that you

had to hold with a holder because it was as hot as the iron itself. Later, when vacuum sweepers came in, we had one of those, and we had a vacuum cleaner. We had all the comforts that we needed.

*Can you think of anything that would have been considered a great extravagance that your mother might have wanted?*

Oh, during the days that we lived in Reno before we went to Carson City, there were some things that she would have liked to have had, but I don't remember that there was anything that she was always nagging my father about.

*Did your family ever own a car?*

In those days a car was a very definite luxury. They were only owned by the people who lived on the south side of the river. I think the first car that we owned was an old Dodge automobile that my mother used as transportation from Reno to Sparks when she was teaching in the Sparks school. That would have been while I was in the university, so it would be sometime in the 1920s.

They had streetcars in Reno. And the streetcar that we took was about a block or 2 blocks away from our house, so we used the streetcar transportation. The central stopping place for the streetcars was at the Southern Pacific Railroad depot at Center Street and Commercial Row. The streetcars always came to that end. They ran from there out Second Street to the edge of the town and then up to the university. We used to sneak rides on them all the time when we were downtown and too tired. (laughter) They used to have cowcatchers, they called them, that were made out of lathe-like strips of iron. [An inclined frame on the front of a railroad locomotive for

throwing obstacles off the track.—ed.] When the streetcars were going up to the university, where we lived, they'd have those up so we'd latch onto the cowcatchers and ride up home and then drop off.

They had another streetcar, one that went out to Burke's addition, which was developed around where the airport is now. Another streetcar ran from Reno to the Moana Springs, which was the party place in Reno. They had a bath house out there, and there were picnic tables and things of that sort. People would go out there on a Sunday and go swimming.

*Did your family's fortune change over time?*

Oh, yes. When my father went to Carson City and was inspector of the state police, of course, that paid more money than maybe contracting. On a contracting job you bid, and maybe you'll get the bid, maybe you won't. And then the state police position gave him a year-round job. It was a larger salary, because . . . you know these political jobs! And it was a good political job. My father enjoyed his work.

*Do you know why he left the state police?*

No, I don't. We were in Carson City in 1912. I don't remember the situation, but I know we left. Back in Reno he went as maintenance man at the university, and he had that full-time job for 8 or 10 years. It was a good-paying job. Later, before I came down to Las Vegas, he went to work full time for the state highway department. He was a maintenance man for the state highway department, and he was working on the road from Reno to Washoe Valley. Incidentally, that is where his ashes are scattered, because he loved that Washoe Valley view from what he was doing.



*Do you remember any lean times when he held those seasonal jobs?*

Oh, yes, there were times when we were eating beans and pork . . . . Don't misunderstand me—we were never hungry, but there were times when we had to conserve. We never were what you would call affluent. We never went hungry, and we always wore good clothes and were not as bad off as the people who lived down on Fourth Street out by the gasworks.

*At those times was it your mother's income that really helped cushion the family?*

She didn't teach school from the time I entered kindergarten until I got into high school . . . she taught her kids. She was more interested in her own children getting the proper education. Of course, when I was in high school, my mother went to work as a teacher in Sparks, and that made a difference. At the time we were growing up, she was doing substitute work, and she got quite a great deal of substitute work.

*Do you recall any crisis that your family had?*

No. But I'll tell you something that was quite interesting. I was the first person in the state of Nevada to get cured by the diphtheria antitoxin. I had the measles, and I went out and got my feet wet and developed diphtheria. I was about 4 or 5. I was quarantined in one room. Over the doorway I had a blanket which they kept moist so that the germs would not go into the other portions of the house. The doctor came one day and he said, 'This is it. There is a new antitoxin that has been developed, but we haven't tested it here in Nevada. If he takes that, he'll either recover or he'll die.

If he doesn't take it, he'll die.' My parents decided that they'd give it a shot. I think that was before my mother became a Christian Scientist. But, there was no debate about it. They gave the antitoxin to both me and my brother.

When my father was a contractor, he was responsible for a lot of the building of Saint Mary's Hospital up there in Reno. He built 3 houses on Center Street, and we moved into one of them late in my high school days. He contracted for a lot of other stuff there, but I can't tell you what. My father was offered a position by Governor John Sparks in 1908 to become inspector of the Nevada State Police, which was formed during the time that they had the problems of high-graders in Goldfield. The problem there was that the miners were taking the high-grade ore out in their lunch buckets, and then they'd put ropes around the bottoms of their trousers and put the highgrade in their pants and just carry it out. The owners of the mines finally decided they were going to stop it, so they put in what they called a "change room." The miners had to come in there in the clothes that they wore daily, and they'd leave there with those in the lockers and put on suits or whatever they'd wear and go down into the mines. [In November, 1907 the miners struck over the changing room policy, payment in paper scrip and other issues.—ed.]

My father was on the state police, who were sent down to Goldfield to keep the IWWs silent—the Industrial Workers of the World. He was just there to see that peace was kept on the streets. In Goldfield he met quite a lot of the people who later became quite wealthy and did a lot of things for Los Angeles. [Contemporary newspaper accounts indicate that there was considerable investment capital from Los Angeles going into Goldfield stocks and businesses.—ed.]

Governor Sparks had applied to President Theodore Roosevelt to bring in some federal troops to keep order in Goldfield. I don't think that the state of Nevada had a national guard at that time. The governor asked for troops, and they sent the troops out here from San Francisco. The commanding officer looked the thing over and said, "There's nothing here for us to do," so they left. That's when the state police came into effect. It was 1908 when my father left and went down to Goldfield. [The Nevada legislature created the state police in special session, January, 1908. After the state police were formed, Roosevelt recalled the federal troops.—ed.] They didn't have too much difficulty, as I understand it from my father. It was not like some of the strikes of today where they parade up and down and picket and all of that sort of stuff.

*Do you know what your father's attitude was towards the IWW?*

He was opposed to the IWW [chuckles] because he was a member of the state police. It would be better for him to be unfavorable than it would to have been favorable. But he never expressed any great enthusiasm either for the strike or against it. Of course, I didn't see him for about 8 months, maybe a year, because he stayed down in Goldfield as long as the state police stayed there.

Speaking about if the Wobblies ever caused any great amount of trouble, my father told me about the time there was some IWW man who was making a speech down in Goldfield, and he said, "If George Wingfield shows up here, I'll shoot him!"

And here came Wingfield up there, and he said, "All right, take your best shot."

He had a gun strapped onto his hip, and the guy backed down and left town, because Wingfield just had the guts to challenge him.

That was one of the great incidents that I recall.

The miners originally objected to the change rooms, where they had to change clothes before they went down in the mines and when they came out. But after the high-graders were eliminated, no problem. My father never told me of any great incidents or activities of the labor unions.

When my father came back to Reno from Goldfield, he installed the first identification program—fingerprinting and measurements that showed the criminal tendency. Fingerprinting was the main thing, and that is still in force now. He was the one who introduced it to the state of Nevada and studied it very hard and became an expert.

*Why was your father chosen for the Nevada State Police job? Did he have connections with the governor's office?*

Oh, yes. I think that is was one of those political jobs. I have forgotten what the connection was with Governor Sparks, but my father was quite well acquainted with him.

*Was he active in state or city politics at the time?*

He ran once for the assembly but was defeated. His friends always told him, "Well, we didn't know that it was you. You only had A. W. Cahlan on there, and we know you as Burt."

My father was a Republican, a very staunch Republican. He did a lot of electioneering for special candidates. When one of his candidates would get beaten, he'd get literally ill, and he'd have to go to bed to recuperate. At one time when Sam Platt was running for the United States Senate, my father was promised the job as his executive assistant back in Washington if Platt got elected. The

only problem was that he didn't get elected, so we didn't go to Washington.

*Do you know why your father was a Republican? Was there something about the Republican Party that drew him?*

No, I think it was probably because of his grandfather. Now, I don't know whether his grandfather was a Whig or what he was. I'm very vague about the political situation as far as my grandfather and my grandparents were concerned. I know they were Republicans, but that's about all.

My father became president of the Washoe County Building Trades Council in Reno and served for 2 or 3 years. My mother used to ask him why, if he didn't accomplish anything, he kept going to the meetings. And he said, "Well, if I don't take it over the scabs will." The people who wanted to rule would take it over, and we'd have very bad labor troubles, which he saw come later after he was out of the business.

As far as I recall, when he was president of the council he was able to keep things on a pretty even keel. That was before they were giving out all these contracts. The owners would settle with their little group that this was the best way they were going to do it, and that was it. So as far as I know, he never talked about any great difficulty. The only thing was that he told my mother, who wanted to know why he spent so much time in the building trades, that if he wasn't there, the IWWs'd take over. They were a threat all over the state. They weren't so much organized in Reno as the people were a little frightened that they would be if the strikes in Goldfield were not settled. The IWWs were known as Wobblies, and they were just that. The other labor unions, so far as I know, were pretty well indoctrinated in the benefits that would come

from them being at work, and they'd settle for almost anything. I don't remember any strikes that we had in Reno. In Reno we didn't hear about the labor unions. The newspapers were neither pro nor anti, and they didn't give you much information. Labor organizations were not in the newspaper columns.

*What demands were laborers making at the time your father was with the Building Trades Council?*

More wages. The fringe benefits were not exactly known then. They had very little trouble with the contracts that the labor unions signed. Of course, there were not the large operations that needed labor. I mean, there wasn't any great building boom in Reno.

*You mentioned that labor problems became more severe after your father left that position. To what were you referring?*

The officials of the labor unions changed, and they didn't have the same idea of settling a strike as my father did—live and let live. Whatever was good for both sides, OK, they'd sign the contract, but they wouldn't quibble. That was before these fringe benefits were brought out. Wages were the main thing then. If the contractors or whoever they were dealing with could afford it, OK. If they couldn't, we'll settle for the best we can get.

My mother taught school for many years in Reno. She taught, I think, the fourth grade. She taught as a regular teacher and as a substitute. After she got out of the university, she taught school at Huffaker School in Reno. That was about 3 miles from downtown. She used to drive a horse and buggy out to her schoolhouse and hitch the horse on the schoolhouse and then drive it home. She used to have to get up pretty early to get out to the

schoolhouse, driving. Of course, that was before there were any automobiles, any other transportation, and horse and buggy was the only way she could get there.

Everybody who went to her school said that there were 2 things that they learned as far as my mother was concerned: number 1, discipline; and number 2, fractions. All the kids that grew up and had her for a teacher respected her very highly.

*What do you mean by discipline?*

Make them behave! The old ruler deal, which was perfectly all right in those days.

*Do you think that your mother's work was necessary for your family to keep the standard of living that they had?*

It was more or less of an addition. My father was a very proud man. The only reason that he approved her schoolteaching was that it would keep her satisfied and occupied.

My mother was very interested in the suffragette movement. She was a very good friend of Anne Martin's. I think Anne Martin had been active in some of the clubs and some of the social clubs in Reno. Anne Martin was the head of the Nevada delegation of the women's suffrage. She was very close to Mrs. Pankhurst, who was the national leader of the women's movement to get women the vote—not like it has been for the last 5 or 10 years, equal rights for women. This was a movement to get suffrage for the women. Anne Martin made a trip around the state and stopped at every community and built up favor for women's suffrage. I would say my mother was one of the leaders of the suffrage movement in Reno. She was very friendly with Anne Martin, and Anne convinced her that the women should have the vote, so she

did the best she could. My mother went to various meetings and spoke at some of the meetings. She was right in the middle of the thing.

*Did your mother speak anywhere else around the state, besides Reno?*

No, she didn't make any trips outside of Reno.

*Do you recall any other methods the women used, beyond meetings and speeches?*

Well, only organization. It was just like organizing a campaign for any candidate. They did the best they could and had the leaders there to tell the people what the benefit would be. Actually, it was just a campaign. I think Mrs. Pankhurst came into Reno 4 or 5 times, and I went to one of the meetings.

*Do you recall anything about the meeting?*

No. I wasn't interested especially in suffrage! I was interested in seeing who Anne Martin's friend was. I would say I was about 6 or 7 . . . too young to know anything about the movement. I met Anne Marlin several times, but I don't remember that she ever came to the house.

*You were quite a bit older when the vote was actually given to women. By that time had you become more aware of the issue?*

Oh, sure, because it went on for years . . . I mean 2 or 3 years, this drive for the Nineteenth Amendment.

*Did you have an opinion on the matter by the time the amendment was passed?*

No, not especially. I just thought it was that the women would be equal citizens, and that was good enough for me.

*Did your mother's political activities and her points of view cause any friction with your father?*

No. He just said, "You go. If you want to politick for Anne Martin, go ahead. It's all right with me." With Mother he was very, very nice and close to her. We'd discuss suffrage at the table.

*What kind of impact do you think those discussions had on you?*

None whatsoever.

*Did you learn anything about politics or attitudes towards women?*

Oh, yes. It would be the same thing that they're using now, only, as I say, it wasn't directed at equal rights. It was directed at the right of suffrage.

*There were many other movements for reform at the time. Was your mother involved in any of them?*

Oh, I think that suffrage was her one love.

*Do you know anything about your parents' religious views?*

My mother's family, I think, was originally Episcopalian, but my mother became very attracted to Christian Science—Mary Baker Eddy's religion. She was quite active in the Christian Science church in Reno. My father was somewhat of a backslider. He didn't believe in organized religion, because he

didn't trust the people who were preaching. He told me at one time, "These preachers get up on the pulpit and start in telling you what you should and shouldn't do, and then go out the next 6 days and do the same thing that they said you shouldn't do. So what's the use of going to church?" [laughter]

*Did this difference in religious conviction cause any disagreements?*

Not at all, no. My father was indifferent. He took the attitude that if my mother wanted to be a Christian Scientist, that was all right. He wasn't going to fight it.

*Were your parents married in a church?*

No, I don't think so. They were married, I know, by Joseph E. Stubbs, who was, at the time, the president of the University of Nevada. He was a clergyman. They were married in Reno, but I don't know where, whether it was at home or what, because they never talked about it.

*Do you recall when your mother became attracted to Christian Science? Do you know what attracted her to the Christian Science movement?*

Just before we left Reno, which'd be when I was about 6 years old, she became involved. Mother was a very devout Christian Scientist. I think her friends were Christian Scientists, and I think my paternal grandmother was a Christian Scientist. Of course, my grandmother discussed it whenever we were around. I don't know of any other reason, except she started in reading Mary Baker Eddy's book and was attracted to the religion.

Christian Science wasn't accepted very much because of the faith healing. In those



days people really believed in doctors and hospitals. The Christian Science practitioners were the ones who would go to the homes of the ill people and present their theories to the family, and the family would either adopt them or throw them out the window. There were some very, very devout people—practitioners—who would just absolutely prevent somebody who was seriously ill from going to a hospital, or if they had to have a leg amputated or something of that sort. I don't think that my mother was especially against doctors and hospitals. But outside of that, she accepted the theories of the religion. She went about going to church; she went to church every Wednesday and Sunday. The Christian Science religion, especially in Reno (and that I know about) wasn't very well accepted. I've read things in the newspapers that criticize the Christian Science religion.

Mother didn't try to teach me the Christian Science religion, but she did get the church to hire my brother and myself to pump the organ in the old Masonic temple. We had to be at the meetings on Sundays and Wednesdays. We were pumping the old pipe organ that they had there, and we had to be sure that they had enough juice so they could play the organ.

*Do you know if any of your mother's Christian Science friends were also interested in suffrage?*

No, not that I remember. Of course, I don't remember who else besides Anne Martin was involved—Anne Martin and my mother—because I was too busy playing baseball and basketball to find out what my mother was doing.

I wasn't very religiously inclined during my growing up period. When we were in Carson City, I started to go to the Episcopal Sunday school. That didn't interest me very

much, so my brother and I both quit and didn't go to the services anymore. Then when I was in the university, I was very interested in basketball—athletics.

They had a league at the YMCA in Reno. You had to have an organized team—you were representing somebody. So a friend of mine and I went to the pastor of the Methodist church up there and asked him if he could use a couple of basketball players. He said he was just thinking of putting together a basketball team, but we'd have to go to the church services as a result of being a representative of the church. So during the basketball season I went to church practically every Sunday, but I didn't pay too much attention. That changed when I married Florence.

Florence was also in Christian Science. She and her mother were very devout Christian Scientists. Florence was somebody who would not force you into doing something that you didn't want to do, but she would lead. She would lead very quietly and sincerely and get you into church. We used to go to church quite often over here. But because I was in the newspaper business, I was too busy building the newspaper down here to worry about my soul.

*In some of your writings and biographical material you have described yourself as a Protestant. What did you mean by that?*

It was just a matter of whether you were Catholic or whether you were Jewish or whether you were Protestant.

*What were your parents' attitudes towards drinking?*

My father was not an alcoholic, but he always had a little toddy before he went to

dinner. He always told me, "I don't want you to drink, but if you do want to drink, you come home and drink with me." It was quite an education.

*How about your mother?*

She didn't accept liquor at all, but I never knew of my mother and father having any drastic argument. If they had any arguments, they went somewhere where we weren't informed.

*Did your mother ever counsel you about drinking?*

No, not necessarily. I think that she left that to my father. I never did drink.

*What were their attitudes towards gambling?*

During the time that I was growing up, gambling was legal in the state. Of course, the Presbyterian minister in Reno (I've forgotten his name) was the leader of the anti-gambling people. My mother was very active in that action. My father didn't care one way or another, because he was not a gambler. He felt that he wasn't completely able to tell somebody else how to run their life. He ran his life, and he more or less followed the Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. That was his religion.

*Do you think your mother's views on these matters had any impact on you?*

I learned a lot about the evils of gambling. It was just something that shouldn't be allowed. But as far as my father was concerned, and as far as I was concerned, gambling has always

been a part of the state of Nevada. The Forty-Niners coming across the plains always had a deck of cards.

*Did you ever have any difficult discussions on this issue with your mother?*

No. It was all very congenial. She stated her views, and I either agreed with them or didn't agree with them. Of course, we were not in a family that really got into big arguments. Our home was very quiet and very nice to grow up in.

*Who was the disciplinarian in your house?*

Both. But more my father. I had certain jobs to do, like mowing the lawn and keeping the wood box filled. We had a big wood box. I don't know whether people will know what wood blocks were—they were pieces of wood that were cast off from lumber mills that varied in size from very small to fairly large. It was my job to keep the wood box full, so that my father would not have to stoop over to get wood. He used to get up about 6:00 in the morning, and every time I'd forget to fill the wood box, he'd yell upstairs and make me come downstairs and, if it were in the wintertime, go out in the snow and bring in the wood. So I finally learned that that was my job and I was supposed to do it.

My mother always used to tell me and my brother, "You're just aching for a whipping." And sooner or later I'd get it. My father'd take me out into the woodshed with his belt to give me a few whacks.

*Was that done mostly to enforce chores?*

Well, yes, or something that I did that was drastically wrong.

I remember the last whipping he ever gave me. We were living on Lake Street at the time, and we had a vacant lot in back of the house. I must have been 13, 14. We were playing baseball. My father told me that the next time I broke a window, I was going to get a whipping. And we broke a window. I think I was pitching. The batter hit a foul ball, and it went up into the second story and broke the windows. So sure enough, I got my licking. It was the only time that I can remember that I didn't deserve a whipping. The other times I knew what they were for. I knew that they were supposed to teach me something, and they did.

*Do you think that was the last time he used that method of discipline because of your age?*

Yes. I was in my teens then.

*Was your parents' method of discipline fairly common for the time?*

Oh, yes for the times! On discipline my mother never would interfere with my father, and my father would never interfere with my mother. My mother would always say, "Wait till your father gets home." So I knew that she would tell him what was wrong. He was the one that dealt out the punishment.

*If you were to consider both parents, would you say that one had a greater impact on your life than the other, or were they equally important?*

I think I had more contacts with my father. My father and I used to sit out in the front porch of the house at 815 University Avenue. While he was watering the lawn, we'd talk . . . I was very interested as a youngster in playing baseball, and my father had been

a pitcher for the university team. He had an offer from the Sacramento Solons, who were in the Pacific Coast League at that time, but he threw his arm out. He got his shoulder badly . . . guess they call it the rotator cuff now. He couldn't hardly throw the ball up to the plate. And we used to talk about different teams . . . We'd go out and play catch in the backyard.

*Do you remember anything of importance that you used to talk over with your mother?*

I used to talk to her about what the future meant and whether I should play professional baseball or go to college. She didn't think much of baseball players. At that time they weren't as prominent and weren't earning as much money as they are now.

There was one time I remember regarding my mother: I was in the seventh grade, and we were about to have a final examination in arithmetic. My mother told me what I should do. She said, "You go over each problem 3 times, and if you come out with the same answer twice, put down that answer." I can remember that I came home from school, and she said, "Well, how'd you do?"

She had instructed me to bring home the questions. She asked me how I did the addition. You see, we had 4 rows of numbers, quite a long bunch of numbers to add. I had added them up 3 times and come up with the same answer 3 times, but I forgot to put it on the examination paper. So she said, "You go back and talk to Miss Hobbins," who was my teacher in the seventh grade, "and explain the circumstances to her and see what happens." So I did. Miss Hobbins allowed me to put it on the answer sheet. For the first time in my life, and I think for the last time in my life, I got 100 on the examination.



*Was your mother a driving force behind your education?*

Yes, she was quite stern, but she had higher expectations for my brother than she did me. She and my father more or less let us choose what we wanted.

*Do you think that your parents had any overall goals for your family as a unit?*

No, I don't think so. It was more or less take it as it comes. I mean, it's there, out there somewhere for you. If it's right for you, you'll take it.

Our entire living experience was connected to the town in which we lived. That was the outer limits of the community, because we didn't have automobiles. You couldn't go anywhere. For instance, if we wanted to go to Franktown, how would we get to Franktown in a horse and buggy in a day? My parents kept track of what was going on through newspapers, entirely, because that was before radio.

*What kinds of things interested your parents?*

My mother and father were quite interested in acting. They were members of the Reno Dramatic Club, which put on plays, like the *Pirates of Penzance* and *Madame Butterfly*. My mother and father, before I was born, were members of the Reno Wheelmen's Association, which was a bicycle organization which competed with a lot of bicycle teams from California. My father and mother were in that area. That was part of their living. But as far as the living now is concerned, you wouldn't believe the kind of living that we had when I was growing up. I mean you had to make your own entertainment.

One of the thrills that my brother and I used to get was in the summertime, when the circuses would come to town. Reno was halfway between Salt Lake City and San Francisco. All the circuses and stage plays and everything would stop over in Reno for a long performance and make a little money and go on. I can remember there were the Sells-Floto outfit, the Barnum-Bailey group, the Fore-Paugh and the Ringling Brothers; all those came in to Reno. They set up their tent down on Fourth Street on the big vacant lot. My brother and I would get up in the morning and go down and meet the train, and then we'd go down to the circus grounds and find out if we could do something to earn some free tickets. We watered the elephants and washed off the zebras and all that stuff that people in the circus didn't want to handle, and we'd get tickets. We'd be able to lead the zebras or llamas or whatever—tame animals—down the street in the parade. So we were the big shots when the circus came to town.

It was very interesting to watch them load the circus up 5 minutes after the last person had left the big top. It was down on the ground and being folded up. The elephants had been taught to carry things. They'd put them in their trunks, go down to the train with them, and that saved a lot of manual labor. After they got the wagons down to the trains, you had to shove the circus wagons up on a ramp, up in a freight car. The elephants would get their heads against the front end of the trucks and just push them up the ramp, put them in place, and come back out and get another one. They had blaze pots that they strung all the way along from the circus lot to the train, and all they had to do was set the elephants loose, and they'd follow those pots up to where they were supposed to go. It just led them right down to the circus train. It was very interesting.

A couple of other things that took the interest of the kids in Reno were the stage shows that came through and the chautauqua. The stage shows played at the Majestic Theater, which was on the corner of Lake and Second Street. It was the old Nixon Hall. Then in the summertime they had chautauqua, which was a traveling stage presentation. They'd have speakers, and they'd have singers and things of that sort that traveled a circuit. We didn't lack any entertainment when I was growing up there. I heard William Jennings Bryan speak one time, and then there were some musical groups that I heard. There were things that came along.

I can remember when Teddy Roosevelt was running for president on the Bull Moose party. My father took me down to Powning Park, which now is occupied by the Pioneer Theater Auditorium in Reno, across the street from the Riverside Hotel. I had a chance to shake hands with Teddy. My father was really impressed with Teddy Roosevelt. The fact of the matter, I think he voted for him.

*Did your parents have an interest in national affairs and national politics?*

Yes, what was brought to them. They didn't go away someplace to attend something. The state legislature was a part of my father's interest. National politics were 300 miles away, and nobody cared. Those things were too far away to worry about. The people who ran for the state legislature from Reno or Carson City or the state—we were interested in them. If you knew the people—and most of them did know the people who were running for office—you could very easily choose between 2 or 3.

*Did you feel that you lived in an isolated world, or is that too strong a word?*

It's too strong a word. We weren't confined . . . That's one reason that I am so amazed that the United States is doing what it's doing—feeding all these people who are all around the world—because I never was brought up in that kind of an era. The things that happened within Reno or Carson City or Virginia City were the things that counted most. As far as the present day is concerned, it was an isolated situation, because the only information that we could get would be over the Morse telegraph system. That was why the newspapers were so successful during those days. This was all that you could get. We were confined because of a lack of facilities.

*Did your family travel together?*

Yes, every summer my brother and my mother and I used to go down to Pacific Grove in California. We'd go down for 2 or 3 weeks and enjoy the beach. My father was a very, very staid guy. He wanted to stay in Reno. And as far as traveling was concerned, New York City was 1,000 miles away.

About the only traveling that we did was up to my grandfather's ranch in Susanville. He had a large ranch there, and we used to take the Nevada-California-Oregon Railroad. It was a short line and a narrow-gauge line. We used to go up there for holidays—Thanksgiving or some of those.

*Did you ever take trips to any of the larger cities in the West?*

We'd stop at San Francisco, usually, going to Pacific Grove. We'd have to maybe stay overnight to catch the train.

My mother took my brother down to San Francisco to see the White Fleet come in. The White Fleet was sent around the world by Teddy Roosevelt to impress the other

nations with how well armed we were. I was left at home, and I was very disappointed. But I was quite well paid, because they brought me home an electric train that I had a lot of fun with.

The biggest fair that they had in San Francisco was to commemorate the finishing of the Panama Canal. Panama-Pacific International Exposition was the official name of it. I think every nation in the world had a building. That was in 1915, so I was 13.

I can remember the Tower of Jewels was right at the entrance of the fairgrounds. They had different-colored glass, like chandelier glass, that came down, and the light would change all the time. That was one of the things. Of course, the thing that my brother and I were most interested in was the fun zone that they had. We took all the rides and got all the side shows that were down there. Then, too, they had a steam engine that blew off steam and smoke and all of that stuff and played different-colored lights on it. It was very beautiful in the evening. That's where I first became interested in aviation, because they had a Nicaraguan who was flying a monoplane. A monoplane in those days was very scarce—very few of them made. The pilot did stunts. Art Smith later flew a biplane, and he was the first one to land on a battleship.

*Do you remember your mother taking any other kinds of excursions?*

I think my mother went to Yosemite at one time. Of course, in her religious stuff they used to have a camp up at Lake Tahoe, and she'd go up and attend that for a week or 10 days. It was religious. It was sort of a seminar.

But, it was very difficult to go anywhere because you didn't have an airplane that you could step into at 4:00 in the afternoon and get out in New York City at 2:00 the next

morning. Any vacations that we took were usually up to Lake Tahoe, or if we went to San Francisco, we went on the train. And that was the way that you got around. If the train didn't go directly where you wanted to, you'd take the train and then take a stagecoach into the place that you wanted to go! This was what happened to us at my grandfather's ranch in Susanville. The train ran to Doyle, which was in California about 10 miles from where my grandfather's ranch was. We took the train to Doyle, and they met us with a stagecoach and took us in to my grandfather's ranch.

*Did you have any great desire to leave the area, to travel widely?*

Well, I wanted to be a professional baseball player. The closest place that had a team was Sacramento, so I had my eye on Sacramento. I'll tell you later why I didn't make it.

When I was in college, as a young freshman, I used to go down to the post office at Christmastime and handle all the sacks that were loaded onto the train from the post office. I'd see these various names—New York, Newark, Chicago—and wonder if at any time I would ever make it to these communities. I finally made most of them. At the time, it was a passing fancy during the Christmas holidays. There was no way to get there except the train, and it'd take pretty near a week to get there. So there was no possible chance, and then we didn't have sufficient funds so that we could pay the fare.

*Did you have any jobs as a child?*

Yes. Very fortunately, I had been able to earn all my own money that I spent down at the Panama-Pacific Exposition by selling newspapers. The Journal used to come out in the morning, and I'd go down and get my

newspapers. I had the best corner in town—Second and Virginia Street. That was where all the traffic was. So I'd sell them until the Examiners and Chronicles came in from San Francisco. I'd sell them till about noon and then go home to rest for a couple of hours and then sell the .Gazettes in the afternoon. So I was able to make my own money that I spent at the Exposition.

During that era from 13 years old or 12 years old until I was maybe 16, 17, I wrapped soap—old lye soap—for the mayor of Reno. August Frohlich was the mayor at the time, and he had a soap factory. My brother and I used to go over on Saturdays and wrap soap for him at 5 cents a bar. Mr. Frohlich was one of the contacts I made when I was selling newspapers. I knew practically everybody in town because I was selling the newspapers.

I ran elevators for a couple of years in some of the buildings that had elevators. Then I had a steady job with Fred Strassburg, who had a cigar store in Reno. I went down and opened up at 6:00 in the morning and used to have to swab out the spittoons and shine them up—they were all brass spittoons—and I had to shine them up and make them look good. I'd stay there until about time to go to school and then come back in the afternoon and let him go home to have a rest. I'd stay there from about 3:30 until 6:30.

*Did you keep the money for your own purchases, or did you have to contribute to the family economy?*

I never contributed to the family. They didn't force me to; I mean, they didn't ask me to . . . . But I sure didn't save it.

*How did you spend it?*

Any way I could find! If I'd go downtown and see something that I liked in the window, I'd go in and try to see if I could buy it, yes, sure.

*Were you a reader as a child?*

Yes, quite extensively . . . the Tom Swift, Rover Boys and Merriwell Kids series. Most of the kids' books, I read. In the seventh grade, Miss Hobbins always used to read to us from a book that was the rage of the day, as far as kids are concerned—The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, or a Rover Boys book or stuff of that sort . . . Frank Merriwell.

*Do you think books influenced your life in any particular way?*

Oh, yes, sure. Tom Swift and His Airplane—I was interested in that. The Rover Boys were always interested in traveling, and then the Frank Merriwell series was the story of kids at Yale University. I became a very ardent supporter of any of the athletic teams that Yale had because of these books.

Incidentally, Gilbert Patten, who wrote the Merriwell books under another name—and I've forgotten what it is now—and I met in a bar here in Las Vegas years ago. We had a very nice discussion about Yale until the early morning hours, but he never went to Yale! He knew that it was in Connecticut, but that's about all. His was a very, very salable book—paperback book. He was almost as prolific as Louis L'Amour is now; Patten put out at least one book a month. Of course, that reading brought me into contact with things that were going on in the East. My life was expanded by my reading.

My formal education started at the Babcock Memorial Kindergarten. I guess I

was the only guy in Reno who played hooky from the kindergarten. Then I started first grade in Carson City. I went through the fourth grade in Carson City and was in the fifth grade when I came back to Reno. The Carson Public School served a double purpose: from the freshman class through the senior class was on the upper floor of the building, and then the grade classes were on the bottom floor. I would guess maybe there would be 100 in all of the classes.

The Orvis Ring School in Reno was one of the modernization buildings. It was built in mission style: it was kind of a U-style with a fountain in the center of the U. The first, second, third and fourth grades were on the south wing of the U, and the fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth were on the north side.

The principal of Orvis Ring was Libby C. Booth, who was a very, very famous teacher in Reno. If you got out of line, Libby C. would take care of you with a ruler. I can remember one time . . . My brother and I used to go down and listen to the World Series being played in the fall. [Prior to the development of commercial radio in the 1920s, it was the custom to send inning-by-inning accounts of World Series baseball games by telegraph to towns across the country. Descriptions of the action would be read aloud in a public place, often in front of the newspaper offices, as they came off the wire.—ed.] If it went into extra innings, we stayed there as long as we thought we could, then we rode our bicycles back to the school. Just as I was going in the door, the Reno Steam Laundry 1:00 whistle blew. Mrs. Booth said, “You’re late.”

And I said, “No, I’m not late; the whistle just blew.”

She said, “The Reno Steam Laundry is not running this school; Libby C. Booth is. You’re late; you’ll stay after school.” So I did

Libby C. Booth was a wonderful person. She was a strict disciplinarian. Anybody who went to Libby C. Booth knew discipline. She was able to get her point over to her students in any of the fields that they were talking about at the moment. She was generally accepted by everybody in Reno as the number one teacher. She had the same reputation in the northern part of the state that Maude Frazier has down here. There are a lot of people who give credit to Mrs. Booth for their success in life.

The teachers they had then were very interested in the real education of the kids. They would just drill you and drill you and drill you. I can always remember we had a class that was given to locations. You had a list of locations—Bangkok, Hong Kong, Missouri River, all of those places. We’d have to learn where they were. That’s the way I learned geography.

We used to have history classes, of course. I was more or less of a history buff from the time I was in the fifth grade, for that matter, because I was interested in where my family came from. I was interested in what happened to people, and where they came from. I was just that way. And that did me a real lot of good when I was in the newspaper business.

*Do you remember what kinds of children attended school with you?*

Oh, we had all sorts of people. I can remember the Cassinelli kids—Vic played the accordion; I’ve forgotten what his brother’s name was. We used to have Friday afternoon as play acting or entertainment. This Vic Cassinelli’d bring in his squeeze box and give us a little concert in the afternoon. That was in the eighth grade.

In Carson City I sat in back of a young kid by the name of Hughie Sing, who was, as



it sounds, a Chinese boy. We played together. I lost track of him for 10 years, I guess. The next thing that I knew, he was arrested for the murder of a man in Mina in 1921. It turned out that he was a member of a Chinese tong. They sent him along with an older man, Gee Jon, down to kill this man in Mina. They killed him and were caught and sent to prison with a death penalty for both of them. The people of Carson City, and I guess Reno, too, sent petitions that they save this Hughie Sing's life. So his sentence was commuted. He went to work as a cook for the warden out there. I met him several times when I was older, and we've recalled old days. He was the most famous person at the time that I was in contact with.

There was a kid by the name of Dewey Sampson, who was an Indian who came in from the Indian school. The legislature passed a law that the kids at the Indian school were integrated with those who were going to school already. Dewey Sampson used to play on our baseball team—both he and Hughie Sing. Both of them played on our baseball team. Everybody was color blind. I mean we just took them as they came . . . . Dewey Sampson became chief of the tribe up there. I used to see him a great deal of the time later in life. I mean it was strictly integration, and nobody bothered about whether they were Jewish, Italian, Chinese, Japanese, whatever. We went through high school with all these kids; we became quite familiar. They were kids; we played together. That was it.

*Were you a good student? Were you very interested in school?*

I got by the easiest way possible. I was not a "student." I was more interested in athletics. I was too light to play football, but I managed to play basketball and baseball. My brother had

the brains. I was given, I guess, the physique. Al played baseball, was interested in baseball, but he was more of a student. He loved to find out things about things. I think that's why he took electrical engineering, although he never practiced as an electrical engineer.

*Did any teachers have a great impact on your life?*

I had one teacher who I just couldn't stand. Miss Miller was her name. It was in the fifth grade. She was the sweetest person you ever heard; when she talked, honey just dripped out of her mouth. I just couldn't stand that envelopment. I had Miss Wright in the sixth grade, and she was a very, very stern disciplinarian. I think the person who had the most effect on my life was Libby C. Booth, the principal. They were teaching school because they wanted to teach people what to do. Some of them were good in grammar, and some were good in arithmetic and stuff of that sort. They really taught you; they were devoted teachers. I had Miss Frances Wright in the sixth grade, Miss Helen R. Hobbins in the seventh and Libby Booth in the eighth. They all had influence on my future.

The Orvis Ring School had a vacant lot next to the schoolhouse; that used to be our playground. During the recess we used to play rugby football. I can remember that usually I was playing halfback on the rugby team. I'd carry the ball up, and I'd get my shirt torn off . . . or get it badly torn. I'd go home day after day with a shirt torn! [laughs] My mother got so mad at me that she bought me a sweater, and I went to school in a sweater so I wouldn't get my shirt ripped off. Again, we made our own diversions. They did have some swings on the grounds; that was just about all the stuff that they had recreational.

*Did you ever pursue individual sports? Did you ever do solitary kinds of activities like hunting, hiking . . . ?*

No, none of that stuff. I wasn't especially interested in that stuff. I couldn't any more look a deer in the eye and shoot them than I could shoot my own mother.

Of course, when I was growing up in Reno the Mount Rose School was way out of town, and yet it now is in the center of some of the finest houses and residences that there are. It was right at the foot of the mountains. That was way out in the country then. Sometimes a couple of us boys'd go up the canal that fed the power company with water and go up near Verdi. Then we used to ride our bicycles up into that area also. Whenever we traveled we usually traveled on a bicycle because I wasn't especially interested in walking.

*It sounds to me as though your heart was in team sports.*

That's right. Yes. Very definitely. The idols that I had were baseball players. It was that I had seen them play. When we went down to San Francisco for any purpose at all, one of the main things was to go to a basketball game. During the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition, my mother and brother and I went down and stayed in San Francisco for a month. We'd go to the fair down there. We'd go to the fair in the morning and the ball game in the afternoon.

I was very interested in the Nevada State Journal, which was on Second Street in Reno at that time. There was a black patch around the bottom of the plate-glass window, in which they would put the scores of the Pacific Coast League. My brother and I'd always go down in the evening when we knew the scores

were in, to find out how the San Francisco Seals came out, because they were my very, very favorite people.

Al finished high school in 3 1/2 years and then went on to the university and was on the dean's list for 4 years. When I went to high school, it took me 4 1/2 years to get to graduation. But I never did graduate from the high school, because about 2 weeks before the graduation ceremonies I got kicked out of school by Erastus Otis Vaughn, the principal!

We were having an election for student body president of the high school. I was very active in Spud Harrison's campaign for president of the student body. Spud Harrison was a GEK [Gamma Eta Kappa] fraternity man, and a member of the Northwestern Athletic Club which, incidentally, my brother and I had formed. The principal thought the Northwestern Athletic Club was getting too strong, and he didn't want Spud to get elected. We thought we were very nice people, but apparently Vaughn had some objection that he didn't want the Northwestern Athletic Club to be completely overseers of the high school.

I was in a bookkeeping class; I think that it was right close to the principal's office. I was up at the blackboard before school came in, writing, "Spud Harrison for president," and just as I finished the thing, the principal walked in and saw it. He called me into his office and said, "I think we can do without you."

I went home, told my mother and father, and my mother went over to see if it couldn't be cured. He said, "No, he broke the rules, and he's through."

*What was the rule that you had broken?*

I don't know. That's all he said was that it was a rule.

*That seems like a very harsh punishment.*

He was a harsh person, believe me. And he didn't like the Northwestern Athletic Club or anybody who belonged to it. I can't tell you why.

*What was your mother's response?*

She found out, as I found out later, that I could go to college. Fortunately, at that time, the university had special students. You could go to the university with so many credits, and I was only half a credit shy, so I was accepted by the university. I went a semester up there and then transferred the half credit down to the high school record. So, I was really a graduate, but I never went to the graduation exercises, nor did I get a diploma.

*Was your mother upset with you, or was she upset with the school over your dismissal?*

Both. She didn't think I should have been in that position in the first place, and if I hadn't've been there, why, Vaughn wouldn't've had any opportunity to . . .

I'd already had several clashes with the principal. One thing was that we had study hall at the high school that was on the honor system. They had seniors of the high school as the overseers to see that order was maintained. I used to duck out in the last period; I didn't have any class that time. So I used to duck out, go downtown, which was about 2,3 blocks away, buy a pie, bring it back and cut it up and see that everybody in the study hall would get a piece of pie. He found out about that and wasn't too happy about it. Minor things like that—I guess it was major to him, but it was minor to me.

*What kinds of contributions did the athletic club make to the school?*

Oh, not much. It was just the fact that we had outside things to do that the high school didn't provide, like playing hockey and stuff of that sort. Of course, the school had a basketball team, but the kids who couldn't make it would join the athletic club. We took trips . . . One California trip that I remember was down to Bishop and Big Pine and Lone Pine. We were gone about a week. It was just one of those things where we just joined together.

My home was very home-like, and my father and mother were both fine people, and they gave me a lot of information. However, I was allowed to rather run wild when I was in the latter part of grammar school and in high school. At that time the facts of life were learned at the Block N, which was a sort of cigar store, fast food delivery and pool hall. I would guess I was 14,15 years old. If you weren't 16 years old in Reno, you had to get a permit from your parents that it was all right for you to go into the pool halls and become active there. My father signed a release, so I was there from the time I was 15 until after I graduated from high school. I learned the facts of life there and made some very fine friends in the pool hall. They still are friends of mine—those of them who are still alive.

When my mother was raising her children, she was a substitute teacher and would be called from time to time to go teach school, so she did not oversee us very much. The fact of the matter is that my mother told my brother that he was to be responsible for my actions. My brother was 3 years older than I. Of course, I resented that, but we made it all right, as far as the raising of the children was concerned.



*In comparison to other parents of the time, do you think that your parents were quite permissive with you? Were you allowed more freedom than . . . ?*

I think so, yes. That came from trusting, from the faith that my mother and father had in my activities.

*What did you learn at the pool hall?*

What they put out in the book *What Every Young Man Should Know*. It was more or less a book on sex and the life of a young man. I learned these things from friends who were playing pool with me. We used to go out all the time together to dances and stuff of that sort. It was much easier for the kids to talk to me than it was for my mother or father to talk to me. These boys were about my age, and they were from very good families. The Truckee River cut the city in 2, and the high life people lived on the south side, and the peons—so-called—lived on the north side. So we were more or less together at the pool hall. That was a gathering place. There were sons of attorneys and sons of doctors, sons of newspaper people. They had a very good overseer of the pool hall. He wouldn't allow any of this funny stuff to get going in the pool hall. His name was Dick Sheehy, and he later became warden of the prison. I think that we gave him a good lesson in handling juveniles or outlaws or whatever you want to call them. [laughter]

*Did your brother also hang out at this pool hall?*

No, he was in another ring in the community—mostly the kids who were going to the university with him. They had a lot to talk about as far as the university was

concerned. We had a lot of talk of how the world should be run. So they were 2 entirely different groups.

*Did you see Reno as a place of opportunity for yourself as you were growing up?*

Oh, yes. I was convinced that I would live there the rest of my life. I knew of no other town, no other city, outside of San Francisco, that I'd like to live in.

When I was a boy, I would say that Reno had between 8,000 and 10,000 citizens, and it didn't have too many paved streets. I remember the downtown section, of course, had paved streets. Downtown extended from maybe the railroad tracks down to the river, and from Lake Street over to Sierra Street.

I can remember that in the summertime they used to have water wagons that came around to water down the streets, and they had sprinklers that sprinkled off to the side. In the summertime when it got a little too hot, and the sprinkling wagon came along, we'd follow it for a couple of blocks—get cooled off by the sprinklers. The city used those, and they also had steam rollers; they had big steam boilers. There were 2 big wheels in the back and a solid roller in the front. It rolled down the streets after the sprinklers had been down there to bed them down so the dust wouldn't be so bad. I always used to look down at those things and think what a great deal it'd be to go out there and get inside the rim of the big wheels and walk around the wheels as they turned, but I never quite made it. It was something that I had a hunch that I ought to do, but I never did.

Reno was a growing town at that time, and it was a well-settled town. It more or less was the same kind of a town that Las Vegas was: it was built by the railroad. The

Nevada-California-Oregon, the Southern Pacific and the Virginia and Truckee [V&T] Railroad all served the community. Reno was a shipping point for a lot of things—for going out to Susanville, or out to Gardnerville and Minden, Carson City . . .

The railroad had a big storage shed where they stored all this stuff that was shipped in. It extended from the west side of Lake Street, across Center Street, and to the north side of Virginia Street. That thing just cut Center Street off. You couldn't get across the tracks. The trains would come in there, and a lot of times they would have passenger trains that came in and extended past Lake Street, and you couldn't get past Lake Street. The only place you could get across was Virginia Street. They haven't been able to correct that, although they did get the shed torn down and Center Street goes through. As I say, it just cut the town in 2 pieces.

In Reno there was a red block industry that made the blocks for building. I think there were 2 sawmills in town. As far as the economy was concerned, farming and dairying were 2 of the main industries there. All of those places out there where the airport is now and on the west side of Virginia Street, out there it was all farming land. That was all farming land clear up to Steamboat Springs. They had all kinds of dairies there. Most of those streets—Kietzke Lane and several of those streets up there—are named after the people who owned those ranches. There was some truck gardening, but the majority of farming was hay and wheat and stuff of that sort. Lumbering was more or less up in the northeastern part of California. You see, we served Susanville and all that Honey Lake Valley and Portola. Lumbering was quite active in Portola . . . I've forgotten the names of the other towns up there . . . Graeagle.

Reno was an orderly town. Reno was a good town to live in. We had plenty of things to do. From my newspaper business—from selling newspapers to delivering them and then publishing—I had access to practically every place there was in town. We were never bothered; it was like it was down here in Las Vegas earlier. The image of Reno as the great divorce center came later when all the newspapers were running around. Rockefeller, one of the rich people in New York, came out to get a divorce, and that started the string of divorcees coming into Reno.

*You had a real sense of community, then?*

Oh, definitely! We used to have high school basketball games, and the university basketball, football or baseball games. Those entertained the people. When I was in high school, we had the Northwestern Athletic Club on the north side of the river and the Hermits Club on the south side. We used to play baseball and ice hockey on the Manzanita Lake there at the University of Nevada. We had a lot of fun—a lot of time for fun.

*There were a number of minority groups and immigrant groups living in Reno when you were there. How did they fit into the community?*

It was more or less the usual routine of a western town at the time, because there were so many ethnic groups up there. There were the Chinese, who were brought in to build the railroad from San Francisco to Reno, and then there were the Italians and a few Mexicans there. It was quite a cosmopolitan town. They, of course, settled among themselves. There was quite an Indian population that used to be down on Lake Street, near the railroad tracks. The Italian families were down on the east side of town, down by the gasworks.

*Do you recall how Italians made their living?*

They did gardening and farming . . . they had businesses there. The Andrucettis I remember. They were Italian; they had a bakery.

Fourth Street was mostly composed of Italians. It was sort of the Italian village. And the other people were ordinary workmen, and while they were not poor, they were not rich. The neighborhood was fairly well kept up. It was mostly the Italians and some of the people like the chimney cleaners and people like that in those kinds of jobs. Some of them were on the railroad and then others were ranching and gardening . . . vegetables and that sort of stuff.

*Were there a lot of common day laborers?*

Yes. That was probably, oh, 50 percent of the residents of Fourth Street.

*How about Germans? Were there Germans in Reno?*

There were Germans there, but I think that they established out in Washoe Valley. My Uncle Will, who married my Aunt Alice, was a German, and he settled out there, as I said, right close to Bowers Mansion. And then there were the Heidenreichs. There were also several Italians out there in that area who were farmers. In Gardnerville and Minden there were German people.

*Were there any Japanese people?*

Very few! I don't recall any Japanese family in Reno proper. Chinese . . . there were hordes of them. They settled there after they got through working on the railroad. I used to know all of them there. As far as the Chinese

were concerned, they mostly were in the laundry business, or they had the guys who walked along with those neck braces that had the 2 baskets—one basket on each side of their body. They were from Chinese ranches, so there were some Chinese who were ranchers. We used to throw rocks on the top of Chinese laundries down on Virginia Street and then watch them come out the door, chasing us kids as we went. Outside of that, it was just fun. [chuckles]

*Do you recall any black families?*

Well, yes. Jackson White was the black kid that I knew the most intimately. He was the son of the maid at the Yerington home. The Yeringtons were the principal owners of the V & T Railroad. We used to go down there and play in their backyard. The Negro boy was one of our pals. He played baseball with us, along with the Chinamen and the Italians—all the rest of them. I don't remember any black segment of Reno. I know there were some blacks—the porters and the people like that who were employed by the railroad. But, of course, most of those people lived in Sparks.

*Did you ever learn anything about Indian culture from anyone in the area?*

I did from Dat-so-la-lee. She was one of the famous basket weavers in the Carson City area. She was either a Paiute or a Washo, I can't tell you exactly which one. [Dat-so-la-lee was a Washo Indian.—ed.] I'm not sure where she lived; we knew that she was up on the hill, that's all. When we'd go up to the lake for a vacation, she would be sitting out in front of her little lean-to at the top of a hill overlooking Glenbrook. My brother and I used to go up there and watch her weave her baskets. We watched her for maybe a couple of hours.

A man by the name of Abe Cohn, a Jewish merchant who had a variety store in Carson City, took over all her baskets and made her famous. He made her and her baskets famous by publicity means. Visitors would come in, and word would get out that if you wanted an Indian basket, go see Abe Cohn.

*Were there any other Jewish people living in Reno?*

Scattered. There wasn't any concentration of Jewish people until about 1917 or 1918. It was in that era—either just before or just after World War I.

There was a kid who we used to have on our baseball team by the name of Kuhn, who was the son of a tailor who had a store on Virginia Street. We called the kid "Kike"—"KTike" Kuhn. And there were others; I can't remember the nicknames of the other kids who we played with, but there was no big deal about the nicknames. German kids were "Dutch," and... We had names for all our friends . . . most of them.

*You mentioned that these ethnic groups tended to segregate themselves or to be segregated from the rest of the community.*

Yes, mostly. It was much like the boroughs in New York City, where the Germans would be in one place, the Italians in another, and several little villages within the town. As a rule the Indians and the Negroes and the Chinese never forced themselves, and there was no force that forced them, because they lived their life the way they wanted to live it, and we lived our life the way we wanted to live it.

*Do you recall any hotels where the Basques stayed?*

We didn't have so many Basques in Reno as we did in Carson City. The Basques were in Carson City and Gardnerville and Minden; not too many in Reno. There were some around between Reno and Sparks, and we learned a lot of the Basque traits. There used to be 3 restaurants up there that served Basque food, and we used to go down there every once in a while for dinner.

There was a place on First and Virginia Street where the First Interstate Bank is now, and that was a big Chinese gambling place. It occupied about 75 feet on Virginia Street and it went around clear back to the alley.

*Was it frequented mostly by Chinese people?*

No. The other people would go in there also. They gambled and drank—they had a bar and gambling tables.

*Was there opium smoking in that . . . ?*

Not there. There was a place down by the line, a little Chinese settlement there that had about 3 or 4 houses that ran the numbers games. People from the city would go down there and play the numbers games. They'd have to wait until they got the numbers from San Francisco, so it'd be maybe a day before you knew whether you'd won on your ticket.

*Was there opium smoking there?*

Yes, I'm sure that there was.

*How do you know that?*

From being associated with them. I was a very inquisitive sort of a kid. I'd ask questions; they'd always answer the questions that I asked.

When my father was a boy, he lived with . . . I think his aunt down in Oakland . . . Alameda, and he became acquainted with a lot of the Chinese there in Oakland and then San Francisco. They used to take him down into the opium dens, and he told me about them. I was familiar with them . . . familiar with the smell. You could smell the opium anywhere you went.

*How would you say these various groups fit into the community? Were there any incidents of conflict?*

No incidents—no riots or anything of that sort. Everybody was very happy and glad to be alive. That was their business. I mean, each area tended to their own business.

*Did any of these neighborhoods have a bad reputation? Were there places you shouldn't go?*

Well, we knew about the Chinese tongs . . . those and the pimps. They lived off their women down there—down on the line. The pimps were all types: Japanese, Chinese, Italians . . .

*Were the areas in which there was prostitution considered rough parts of town where one shouldn't go?*

Well, you couldn't go there until you were 18 years old. [chuckles] It was frowned on. It's not like it is today where they're in the penthouses.

I may be making statements that I'll regret later, but the city of Reno had 2 areas of prostitution: one was at the end of First Street, about a block and a half east of the police station, and another one known as the Mohawk. The one on First Street was all the

cribs. They were the little one-room places that the girls occupied. The Mohawk . . . they were parlor houses. They had 3 houses there that were occupied by the girls, and those were the same as the ones in San Francisco. They were the ones that were run by the madams. Those were for the wealthier people. In back of these parlor houses, they had cribs back there.

I delivered newspapers to the red light district when I was about 12, 13 years old. That was part of my newspaper route that came after I sold newspapers, and I had the downtown route. That took in the 2 red-light districts. On one occasion, I was at the Wigwam Theater one Saturday afternoon, I think it was. I stayed a little late for the time I was supposed to get over and get my route papers. I ran like the dickens from the Wigwam Theater, which was on Sierra Street down to the Gazette building, which was on Center Street. I had on a pair of tennis shoes. I was going down a bunch of stairs and not looking where I stepped, and I stepped on a board with a nail in it. The nail hit right in the ball of my foot, and practically went all the way through my foot. I pulled it out and didn't think anything about it . . . went down and got my newspapers. By the time the prostitutes' time came, I was limping and could hardly walk on that foot. One of the girls asked me what was the matter, and I said, "I ran a nail in my foot."

And she said, "You come in here and sit down."

So I went in and sat down. She went out and got some kerosene and she soaked my foot for about half an hour in kerosene, and that probably is what saved me from getting blood poisoning.

*What about your neighborhood, what was it like?*



It was all white. Nobody, as I say, drew any color line in those days. You were what you were. They accepted you for what you were. It didn't make any difference whether you were black, red, tan, yellow, whatever.

*Would you say that the people in your neighborhood were in the same socio-economic bracket as you were?*

Definitely. When I lived up at 815 University Avenue, the people who lived on the corner at the gates of the University were the Fultons, who were in the banking business. Then there was Professor Haseman, who was professor of mathematics at the university, and the Nelsons—the man was in business in Reno. The people were generally the same, along the same type as we. They were neither wealthy nor poor.

*How did your family regard ethnic groups?*

My father was much like the rest of the real Nevadans—he didn't care. He'd work with them.

*Did he have business dealings with them?*

There weren't very many ethnic groups that were in big business per se.

*Would he frequent their stores?*

Oh, sure. It didn't make any difference. The Andrucetti group, they were Italians, and we bought bread from them . . . had no problem.

*Did you see the famous Jim Jeffries-Jack Johnson prizefight in Reno?*

I was in Reno at the time. Let's see, it was 1910—I was 8. Of course, my father was

on the state police, and they had the state police brought in so that they'd keep order in the community. My father came down here from Carson City early to help the police department in Reno control the crowds that were expected. And they came! I can remember special train after special train coming in there and going on the siding in Reno and down in Sparks. The place was just jammed!

Fred Dann, who was a photographer, used to have a studio on the second floor of the Tranter and Staley building, which was a haberdashery outfit. It was on the corner of Second and Virginia Street, and this looked right down on the Nevada State Journal building. So my mother brought us down. I guess it was on the Fourth of July that the fight was held, and I think she brought us down in the latter part of June or the first part of July. We used to practically live in Fred Dann's studio, watching all the progress that was going on. The streets were milling, and you couldn't get from one street to another within half an hour. On Center Street, where the headquarters for the fight were, there were people from curb to curb, or from building side to building side. You could hardly see through the crowd that was there.

Even then, I knew the names of newspaper people who were there: Damon Runyon and Hype Igo. . .several of those people were there. They used to spend their time, when they had covered their story, lagging dollars at the cracks in the sidewalk out in front of the Golden Hotel—that was one of their prime interests.

I went with my father out to see Jeffries train at Moana Springs. The only thing I saw was Jeffries playing cards and drinking whiskey. Of course, after I got older, I thought that was a real good way to train for a championship fight. There was a report

that Johnson was going to throw the fight to Jeffries, because Johnson had got his title from a white man, and they were always looking for a White Hope. They brought Jeffries in from retirement and got him to fight Johnson. The fight was well publicized all over the United States.

*Did you actually see the fight yourself?*

No. They had a big blackboard; it was a traveling blackboard with the Nevada State Journal. They'd write the round-by-round, blow-by-blow account and roll it over. It extended from the front of the building down to where the man could get ahold of the turn handle. I "saw" the fight that way.

One of the greatest thrills of my life at that time was that the San Francisco Examiner—I think it was the Examiner—had a picture of the crowd at the Reno depot. My mother had taken us over there to take a look and to be a part of the crowd. She had on a very large brimmed hat. When they took the picture, there was my mother and myself and my brother standing with my mother wearing this big hat.

*The fight is famous because it had racial overtones.*

Oh, yes, definitely. The reaction of the town was not too bad, as I remember it. There were some talks of race riots and so forth . . . rumors entirely. And there were rumors that there were race riots breaking out in the East and Middle West. It was quite a sensation, but nothing happened with that. In Reno everybody got on the train and left when it was over.

*Do you know how people felt about the outcome of the fight?*

Well, they were very, very sad that the white boy didn't win. But, as I say, there was a rumor before the fight that Johnson was going to throw the fight to Jeffries. The story came out the day of the fight that Johnson denied the thing, and that the white boy would have to take care of himself in the ring. That made a lot of animosity.

It was interesting that the newspaper people in San Francisco had a race to see who could get their papers to Reno the fastest. One of the men, I think it was the Examiner man, decided that he was going to beat them all by going through the snowsheds in his automobile. He made it through the snowsheds all right, but just as he left the snowshed, a freight train came along. That's how close he came to being hit. [chuckles]

*Did your father have anything to say about the fight?*

No. Not particularly. He was at the fight, yes. He saw the fight. He said Johnson beat the hell out of Jeffries.

*Was he disappointed by that?*

Yes, sure, all the white people were. But, as I say, there was no racial connotation afterward. They didn't have any riots or anything. Johnson won. He was the champion.

I don't know whether most people know how that fight happened to be in Reno. Johnson was married to a white woman; that was some part of the animosity. They were going to have the fight in California, but the governor of California wouldn't allow it, because Johnson was married to a white woman. So Tex Rickard, who put on the fight, moved it up to Reno, and that's how it came to be in Reno.

*Did the university have a great impact on the town of Reno?*

There was a hill there in Reno that the university was built on, and it was always known as “on the hill.” It had only the impact that any university would have on any other university town. It wasn’t the main industry, and it wasn’t the worst industry that we had.

*Was it close enough to the town to have a daily effect on Reno?*

No. Not as much as it has today, I don’t think.

*Were there any conflicts between the town and university?*

Oh, the usual town and gown stuff. The people on the south side of the river looked at them as the literati, and the people on the north side of the town just accepted it.

The people on the south side of the river had other interests than the people on the north side of town. As I say, most of the people who lived on the north side of Reno were working people. Most of the bankers and politicians and all of those people—the people that had made money off sheep and cattle—lived on the south side.

*As a child, how did this become obvious to you? When did you notice that there was this difference?*

Oh, when I was in high school, I guess. It wasn’t noticeable in the early days, because the Orvis Ring School was the center of my educational effort, and all the children from my area the north side came into the Orvis Ring School. Let me see, there was the Orvis

Ring, the Mount Rose and Mary S. Doten school—those all were in the various areas

*The children of the wealthier families went to a particular elementary school?*

Mount Rose and Mary S. Doten.

*How was high school different; what had changed?*

You merged the 2 north and south-side children. The south-side children weren’t any different than we were. They just had a little bit more ego, I guess you would say. They weren’t snooty or anything of that sort.

There was the Twentieth Century Club, which was the women’s organization in Reno. It tended mostly to develop through the people on the south side of the river. You were very fortunate, if you were on the north side of the river, to get into the Twentieth Century Club.

*Were you aware of children who had parents in these social clubs?*

It was quite obvious, because the people who were in the Twentieth Century Club who lived on the south side of the river had all the automobiles in town.

*Did any other kinds of possessions set them apart?*

Oh, money. [chuckles] The houses were much . . . well, they weren’t much better, but they were larger, more ornate. The Flanigans had a house on Virginia Street, just south of California, that was a 2-story house, and it was a very, very nice place. And the Scheelines who ran the Farmers and Merchants National



Bank had a very ornate house, sort of an estate, if it could be called that—it would be now. Senator Newlands had a mansion up on the hill overlooking the Truckee River, and it was that type of people that lived there . . . McCarrans lived there. There was a division.

Mrs. Wilson, whose husband was a professor, was very interested in dancing. She had a dance hall built on the back of her lot. We used to have dances at the Wilsonian, which was the name of the place. It was just a general get-together. I had no special interest in one special gal. I didn't date in high school. I wasn't very enthused about girls when I was in high school. We had the Northwestern Athletic Club, which my brother and I formed from the kids who came down to the Humphrey lot, where we used to play baseball. That occupied most of my time. I didn't pay much attention to girls. I didn't get very interested in girls until I was a sophomore in college. Then I really hit it! When I was in the fifth, sixth grade, I had 2 very nice girlfriends. One of them was Ethel Westfall, and the other one was Florence somebody, but I've forgotten her last name. They were the first 2 girls that I became interested in. I used to push them in the swings out on recess, when I wasn't playing football. We became very sociable and had a real fine time, but after that it was a crowd, not a single one.

*Did the school or any organization put on dances, or any other kinds of activities?*

Oh, yes, sure—dances . . . always the regular junior proms and that sort of stuff. And there were 2 high school fraternities. I never became a member of a high school fraternity. That was one thing that broke my heart. I lived on the wrong side of the river. Phi Kappa Gamma—I'm not sure of that

name—was composed mostly of the people on the south side of the river. And the GEKs, I guess it was, Gamma Eta Kappa, were mostly from the north side of the river. They were high school fraternities and cliquish. At least the boys on the north side wouldn't be out bragging about being fraternity men, this sort of thing. And the ones on the south side were a little classy. They let you know that they belonged to a fraternity. But it wasn't . . . I mean there wasn't any clash between the 2 of them or with those who were not fraternity people. The people on the south side of the river were much more affluent than those on the north side. It was quite a division there.

*So boys like yourself definitely knew that they were being excluded in some areas of social activity?*

Oh, yes. And felt badly about it, too—at least I did. I wasn't chosen, and I wasn't among the elite. It hurts a little. It's just one of those things that you either get your name approved or you don't. [laughs] We knew we were outside.

*I gather your response was to form your own athletic club . . .*

That's right, the Northwestern Athletic Club.

*And then there was another athletic club you mentioned?*

Yes, that was the Hermits. That was on the south side of the river for the elite . . . Harry Gosse, whose father ran the Riverside Hotel . . . We used to have battles on the ice hockey pond at the university. It was quite a competitive atmosphere. It was a lot of fun!

Now, I think, the division has sort of broken down, because you've got the expansion of the community into the hills. Of course, there still is the elite living on the south side of the river and the ordinary people living on the north side. There is the division at the river definitely . . . divided the community into 2 parts.

*Did the elite tend to go to the University of Nevada?*

Generally, yes. A lot of them went to Stanford, and some of them went to Cal. I know of one family that sent their boy to Pennsylvania, but generally they'd go to the University of Nevada.

*What about boys from your group? Did they tend to go to the University of Nevada, or did they tend to get jobs after high school?*

I would say that 50 percent of the kids who graduated from Reno High School went to the university. It was set up here sort of on a pedestal. This was the thing to do. If you were going to succeed in the world, you'd go to the university.

*Do you remember as a child or as a young man ever going to any events at the university? Did the institution have any impact on your life?*

Oh, yes, very definitely. My brother and I used to go up every football season and watch football during their practice sessions up there. And, we'd go to some of the dances. Basketball games—we'd always go to them; they were drawing cards.

Everybody was interested in the university. They used to have big pajama rallies down the street, and the university sort of melded into the community. It was, of course, the

educational leader, and these other things—athletics—they weren't so far out as they are now. But, there was a certain clique—well, it wasn't a clique—a certain group that attended all the university functions. Oh, it'd be a mixed group. They'd go to the graduation ceremonies and the basketball games and anything else that was interesting.

*Did you attend speeches or talks at the university?*

I never did pay any attention. When I was growing up, we didn't pay any attention to them. You went and sat and had to listen to them. [chuckles] But the chautauqua was, as I said earlier, a very nice summer entertainment, usually held over on a vacant lot on the south side.

*Did the elite attend those things?*

Oh, yes, very definitely, and the people on the north side of the river. I think that the time that I was growing up it probably was different than the time that my mother and father were in the university and growing up, because this Reno Dramatic Society was composed of people from all parts of the community. They had it in a place there named the McKissick hall [the McKissick Opera House building]; it was on the corner of Sierra Street and Commercial Row.

The universities at that time were not as much interested in outside things, outside of engineering, arts and science and agriculture and that stuff. They didn't get into any extraneous speakers or things of that sort.

During World War I, a kid by the name of Savage was going to enlist, and he wanted me to enlist with him, so I went down to the enlistment place. The enlistment man asked me how old I was, and I said, "Sixteen."

He said, "You'll have to get your father's consent." My father didn't think that was a good idea, so that's why I stayed at home. I was too young for World War I and too old for World War II.

My brother was in the SATC—Students Army Training Corps; he was going to college at the time. Of course, they never called any of those people up; he finished his college career.

*Do you remember any patriotic activities in the community?*

As I recall, I don't remember that they had anything more than the Red Cross. There were drives for the Red Cross. They didn't have the USO [United Service Organizations] or any of those other organizations; it was mostly the Red Cross. They'd have drives and bond rallies, at which they'd have people come in and entertain and sell bonds. It wasn't nearly as good as the World War II activities. It was something that was new. You would see the Gold Stars—they did have the Gold Stars. My cousin was killed in France. Of course, because Reno was such a small community, you could tell who was over there and who was killed. I can remember that my mother was rolling bandages, and she was quite active in backing up the soldiers. But as far as Reno proper was concerned, I don't remember anything big like the rallies that they had for World War II.

*Was there any source of opposition to the war?*

No, everybody wanted to kill the Kaiser. There wasn't too much of a concentration of Germans, and it didn't make too much difference.

*There was a socialist settlement out near Fallon. There was opposition from that area. Do you know anything about that?*

I vaguely remember that. Eugene V. Debs was the boss of the Socialist Party. But I don't remember. My mother was not active in that group at all; none of my family was. The thing that the ordinary person now just can't understand is that if something was going on in Gardnerville, which was about 42 miles away, that was pretty far away for anybody in Reno to go. Automobiles weren't too available in those days. The only thing that we could get would be word of mouth.

*After the war there was quite a flu epidemic . . .*

There was a flu epidemic during the war and also just after the war. I remember that we used to have to wear masks; I think they were just cloths that went over your nose and mouth. We used to have to wear them to school. All the people in Reno wore them. There were some that didn't.

*Did the flu affect anyone in your family?*

No.

*What about the postwar agricultural and mining depressions?*

Most of the big companies around Nevada that were supplying the stuff laid off their people. Naturally, that ran down to those people who were around Reno. There was some depression, but as far as my family was concerned, I can't remember anything that changed too much.

The passage of the Volstead Act brought in a lot of problems. There was a drive around various states to pass the Volstead Act. The Nevada legislature passed a little Volstead Act before the rest of the states became dry. I can recall that there was quite a drive in Reno when the act went into effect. There was some

great drive to buy all the liquor you could and store it so that the dry spell wouldn't be so dry.

I think it was sometime in the summertime—June or July—maybe it was July 1. Anyway, a bunch of people from Reno, and I among them, went up to Truckee, which was in California; they were wet. California did not go dry until the rest of the United States went dry. A majority of the people from Reno that participated, went up and bought a lot of liquor from Truckee. At about a quarter to 12:00 there was a big reduction in the price of the cases of liquor, and you could buy a case of liquor for \$1.25. Everybody came back to Reno just loaded with liquor.

Then the Prohibition agency was set up, and the agency operated out of Reno. Every time that the agents would start out on a raid in the other part of the state, the word would go out over the telephone that the Prohis [Prohibition agents] were on their way, so ditch your liquor. That would go for Lovelock, Battle Mountain, Elko, Las Vegas, Beatty, Tonopah, Goldfield. By the time the Prohis would arrive, there would be no liquor available.

There wasn't too much of a deal made about Prohibition in the state of Nevada, because Nevada had always been an open area. It was hard to enforce because your distances were so long, and with this underground telegraph they couldn't find any liquor, so they weren't too much interested in enforcing the law.

*You told me that your mother was opposed to drinking. How did she react to this?*

Well, she knew it was a law, and she accepted it, and she never made any big deal about it. She never expressed her opinions. I mean it was just there, and that was it.

The bootleg joints were very rampant in Reno. There were any number of bootlegging

places up there that just practically ran wide open. You didn't have to look through a peephole or knock on the door and have some guy look out the peephole, and you'd say, "George sent me." The doors were open; all you had to do was go in. And if they got caught, they got caught. The same thing was true in Las Vegas during the Prohibition era. There were a great many saloons or bootleg joints—the Golden Camel, the Nevada Club, the LaSalle, and 3 or 4 others—so we never wanted for liquor.

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## STUDYING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, 1920-1926

When I was going to high school, I was never quite sure what I was going to do when I went to college. But it was always agreed by all the family that I had to go to college and graduate . . . be sure and graduate. They found out that a university degree did a lot of good, I think, probably because of their own experiences at the university. So they wanted to see that we had the benefit of a college education. Mother and Father agreed. But I wasn't exactly sure what I wanted to do. As a result, my high school education was rather a smattering of this and that.

At the time that I was going to high school, you had to have 3 solids—that was mathematics, science and that stuff—and you had a choice of 2 other subjects. You had to have 16 credits to graduate. I took business lessons, and then I took the solids. When I graduated, I wasn't quite sure what I was going to do when I went to college.

From 1920 to 1926 I attended the University of Nevada. I signed up for electrical engineering, because my brother was an electrical engineer, but I found out that there

was more to electrical engineering than I wanted to do. It was too tough. So I transferred over to arts and science and took what then passed for a journalism course—a lot of English. One of the things that made me transfer was chemistry, because I just couldn't understand the equations in chemistry—had no idea what it was all about.

One of my parents' friends was Professor Wilson, who ran a drugstore there in Reno for a long time. They got him to tutor me in chemistry for a month or so. Every night I'd go over to their house. When about a month passed by, he told my mother and father, "You might just as well tell him that he can't take chemistry, because he just can't understand the formulas and things that make up chemistry." So I had a flunk in chemistry, and there was no chance of my ever wiping that out. I could have gone up there until today and never understood what was going on in the chemical world.

I went to Dr. Adams, who was the dean of arts and sciences, and I said, "Doctor, if you do not want me to stay around here for the

rest of your life and the rest of mine, wipe out that chemistry, because now I am going into journalism. I think that's the field I want, and I don't know that chemistry will do me one bit of good as far as journalism's concerned." He agreed with me and finally wiped it out.

Another reason that I left the electrical engineering stuff was the fact that on the spring morning or spring afternoons, when I was in the laboratory, I could look out across the quadrangle and see my gal walking down the quadrangle with somebody else. I figured, well, if he can do it, I can do it, [chuckling] so I transferred from engineering to arts and science.

I stayed out of school one semester to go down to the Bay Area and see if I could make one of the Pacific Coast League baseball teams. I was working in Richmond, California, which is the big oil center down there, or was the big oil refinery. They had an inter-company league, and I started to try out for the league. They sent me up for batting practice; the only thing that I could do was hit foul balls. And I just dropped it there, because I knew if I couldn't make the ball club there, I couldn't make the Pacific Coast League. I went down in August and stayed till Christmas and then came home and went back to school.

*What was your parents' reaction when you left college to go and . . . ?*

There was not much of a battle. My father said, "If that's what you want to do, you go ahead." My mother was a little disappointed . . . Of course, I'd had a very hot love affair with a young lady named Merle Lemaire from Battle Mountain. She was the thought of the moment . . . to say it that way. I went out to Elko to play baseball there. She was going to summer school in Reno. I

decided that since she was in Reno and I was in Elko that it wouldn't be best for the love relation. So I hoboed it in from Elko, riding boxcars, and came into Reno. I started to get back where I was, and she very vehemently told me that until I got a good job, she didn't want to see me, which was very fortunate for me. That gave me an incentive, and that was one of the reasons that I went to Richmond, also. During our tour together in Reno, she gave me a lot of confidence in a lot of things that I lacked. She was a very nice gal.

I can recall that it was on 3 July that she gave me back my SAE pin and I became unattached. I went down to a taxicab outfit that was run by a bunch of college kids—Johnny Harrison and Tommy Middleton—known as the University Taxi. I hadn't been driving an automobile very long, and I started driving a taxi when Reno was celebrating the Fourth of July. I had a real tough time trying to drive the taxi! But I made it.

*Were you as enthusiastic about attending the university as your parents were about having you go there?*

Oh, it was just an accepted fact. As far as I was concerned, the other alternative was that if I made the Pacific Coast League, that was it. But when that fell down, I came back to Reno and went back to school.

*Was it a financial burden for your family to send you to college?*

Not especially. I earned a lot of my own money. I had newspaper routes, and I did odd jobs going to school. I contributed to my own education, and it wasn't too bad a drain on my mother and father. Of course, after I was a sophomore in college, my mother



started teaching again, so that added to the family fund. I guess my father was on the state highway department at that time.

*Did you live at home while you attended college?*

Yes. We lived about 4 doors from the gates of the university, so I didn't have any transportation problems.

When I was a sophomore in college. I became sports editor of the UN Sagebrush, which was the college newspaper. I got into that quite thoroughly, and I thought then that this is where I wanted to be. I wanted to be a sports editor and go back to New York City and make a big name for myself like Damon Runyon.

*You have told me that you were very interested in history. Why didn't you pursue history as a major?*

It was sort of an outside interest. There was a place up there in Reno that is called the Court of Antiquity, and it is an area where there are Indian hieroglyphics. We used to ride out to that area, and I saw the hieroglyphics and got a little interested in how they came about. I didn't especially care too much about the history of Reno, but the hieroglyphics sparked my interest.

I think it was while I had my junior year that they started the journalism courses at Reno. A. L. Higgenbotham was the professor. He was a reporter, I think, on the Cleveland Plain Dealer. When this opportunity opened up, he came to Reno and was hired as the journalism professor. I took every course in journalism that I could, both in my junior and senior year.

*Were you close to Professor Higgenbotham?*

Yes. Of course, you were close to anybody when I was going to school, because there were only about 500 people on the whole campus. You could drop into his office when he wasn't busy—didn't have classes—just to talk and find out how we were doing. Higgenbotham got the Journal to give us the opportunity to put out one issue of the newspaper. We put out the one issue, and I was the sports editor of that. It just grew from there.

The reason that I got to work at the Journal in Reno when I did was probably—I am sure of it—that I was the first man to give a play-by-play account of the football games. It was 1919; I was still in high school. I'd run or walk up and down the sidelines, and through a megaphone I would tell the audience who carried the ball and how much yardage he made. When somebody was knocked out, I'd tell them who that was. Through that beginning came the regular announcing systems that they've got in the big stadiums now. I've never been able to find anybody else who could go back that far as an announcer. I think that I was the first one in the United States to do it.

*In your biographical literature you have described yourself as a cheerleader in college.*

It was just leading cheers for the collegiate people.

*Did you participate in any sports activities yourself, any organized sports?*

Basketball. I was never able to make the first team, but I made the goof team, which was the practice group for the varsity. We used to beat them regularly. In 1920



they brought in a new basketball coach. I had played against the Elko High School, which he coached then. The next year he came to the university. He was pleased with the play that I had up in Elko, and he was going to make me on the first team. But I wouldn't give up smoking. It was up to me to either quit smoking or play basketball, so [chuckling] I didn't play basketball with the first team. But it was an enjoyable situation because I got to know all the members of the first team.

I was never too enthused about devout studying, and I didn't crack too many books while I was a freshman and sophomore. So there wasn't a terrible adjustment, as far as I was concerned, because I was having as much fun in college as I'd had in the last 2 years [chuckling] of high school. My mother always used to ask me why I was getting such low grades. I said, "Well, if I pass them and learn something, I think it's better than getting an A and not knowing anything." There was not much of a discussion in the house . . . . As long as I was getting passing grades, that was all that was necessary. Of course, my brother had been on the dean's list for all 4 years. I think he was second in the race for the gold medal, which was given for the best student of the 4 years that they were in college. I think they still give it.

The last year that I was in high school, they used to have cane rush. Cane rush involved a competition in which a cane was treated like a football. If the sophomores won, they could wear coats and vests and nice hats on the campus, and if they lost it, they lost that privilege. Then they had a poster rush in which the sophomores used to put up posters degrading the freshmen. I was with the sophomores who were doing these things all through the early registration period. It wasn't

too tough for me to transfer to the university, because I was familiar with all the stuff that they were doing.

I belonged to Sigma Alpha Epsilon [SAE]. In that picture my father was one of the founders of the THPO [Thompson, Henry, Powers, O'Brien] fraternity, which was the first one on the campus. That later became SAE. My father and my brother were inducted when the SAEs got their charter, so I came in as more or less of a legacy and was in the SAE and was very active.

They used to have the Wolves' Frolic up there, and I think they still have it during Homecoming. It was an entertainment deal, and for 2 years I was the assistant director of the Wolves' Frolic. So that was one of the things. When they had the Mackay Day cleanup—cleaning up the campus in the spring—I was active in that. There were a lot of fraternity things—dances and stuff of that sort—that I was active in, so it was an agreeable deal.

*Tell me how college fraternities differed from high school fraternities.*

I think that the majority of the high school fraternities were designed to duplicate what was going on in the universities. They had their various rituals; they had initiation. In the SAEs we had to go through 3 degrees: the first degree was physical, the second degree was mental, and the third degree was just being welcomed. That was the case with the other fraternities there. Phi Sigma Kappa and the Alpha Tau Omega and the Sigma Nu—those were the national fraternities, and they had some local fraternities that were composed of local people that later went into a national fraternity.

*How important was it to belong to a fraternity?*

Quite important. We used to vie with the other fraternities to get the best athletes and the best scholars. We weren't very successful in getting the best scholars, but we did a good job of it. We went more for athletics than we did for education. The social end was pretty important. You were recognized as somebody if you belonged to a fraternity, and the better the fraternity, the better you were.

I can remember a kid who came from Winnemucca who had had none of the social amenities and didn't know too much about dancing or anything of that sort. We pledged him and initiated him into the SAEs. Before he got out of college, he was one of the nicest persons. That was one indication of what a fraternity can do for a person.

We always were down toward the bottom of the list in academic averages. We installed a study room and forced all of the freshmen and sophomores to go into the study room, and we had tutors who helped them out. We did manage to raise our social standing to a degree, but we never got to first place or in the academics either.

*Did fraternity membership help you establish life-long relationships?*

Oh, yes, very definitely. When I came to the Review-Journal, I can remember that I would run into my fraternity brothers who had gone into journalism in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, New York. They were all naturally friendly people.

*Do you think that knowing these people helped promote your own career?*

No doubt about it, because if you get in a fraternity, you get the ability to talk to people and discuss things that are important on the

campus and make up your mind in doing the thing that is right. I'm sure that if it hadn't been for the fraternity life that I led that I wouldn't be where I am today.

*Did many of your fraternity brothers go into journalism?*

Quite a few, yes. Some of them went into the Associated Press; a couple of them went into the United Press. There were several of them that were reporters and editors on some of the Bay papers—the Chronicle, the Examiner, the Oakland Tribune. The majority of them were general reporters, and some of them got quite high in the journalism field. A name comes to mind—Carrol Cross who became quite a big shot in the Associated Press. He was in San Francisco for quite a while.

*Were you interested in campus politics?*

Oh, yes! Not outside the fraternity, because we would run candidates for student body president and stuff of that sort. We were quite active in doing that. It was dog-eat-dog. Anybody that was in the SAE house, and sometimes a couple of kids from the Sigma Nu house, I helped out in their campaigns. The SAEs would not have somebody running against the kid from Sigma Nu, but you kept pretty well to your clan. I ran for editor of the Sagebrush and got beat by a Japanese kid. That was just after I came back from Richmond.

*The 1920s is often remembered as a period when sexual mores changed very quickly, when relationships between men and women changed . . . .*

It was the Roaring Twenties! And I was the cheerleader. Prohibition had come into

effect, and it was the usual thing for the girls who went out with the fellows in the fraternities to join in the drinking. It was just like the rest of the United States.

It's my opinion that the Prohibition Act was the beginning of the fall of the empire, let us say. As you can see now, you're into drugs, and everybody is interested in drugs. During my college career we didn't have any drugs, except alcohol. Now you can see the degradation of the people of the United States. In 1920 and before that, you could trust the people who were in the leadership of the nation. And now you have a president resign because of lies and because of morals, let us say. [Mr. Cahlan is referring to Richard Nixon's resignation.—ed.] It's something that I just can't understand.

The majority of people in the United States were going to have their liquor, whether they made it in the bathtubs—bathtub gin—or home-brew beer. If you didn't know a bootlegger, if you didn't have your own bootlegger, you weren't one of the upper class. That goes throughout the United States. The morals of the people degenerated. The smartest thing that you could do was to get a gal and go down to the nearest bootlegging joint and get in, because you were recognized as somebody that was "in." The elite of the United States, people in Washington and Chicago and those places . . . if the debutantes could get a job singing in a bootlegging joint, they were accepted and high class.

Before Prohibition I can remember in Reno that if you made a deal and shook hands with a guy, you knew it was a deal. Now you have to dot every i and cross every tin a contract. If they're not done that way, you go into court. When the bootlegging people came along, they had people that they called scofflaws—they were the ones who were the bootleggers. The whole country just went

wild over bootlegging. Liquor, probably, was one of the most important parts of their daily life.

In the SAE house we used to have bottles of liquor stored away in a secret compartment down in the basement, and the other fraternities were the same way. There was never a fraternity dance that liquor wasn't available. At the SAE house we used to have a study hall down in a beer joint, and we'd study until we got about half stiff and then throw the books aside and get to the important business.

The community was as interested in getting liquor as the school kids were. There were raids, but they didn't have much success. For all of its life, Nevada had been a wide open state. The slogan was that you could do whatever you wanted to do, that you're big enough to do, as long as you don't step on somebody else's toes. That was the attitude that pervaded throughout Nevada up until the Second World War, I guess. I don't know what changed it, but now you have to walk a straight line, or you're dead.

*Speaking about social relations between men and women during the period, did you notice any other changes in the way women behaved?*

Smoking became very acceptable, and sex was not far behind. I mean, you had the automobiles that had rumble seats, and it was the usual thing that if you got a gal in the rumble seat, you were halfway home. There was very, very great community disappointment in the attitude, but there was never any special action taken against it. My parents didn't pay much attention to it. They let me live the kind of a life that I wanted to live after I got to college. My father apparently thought if he got me as far as college, I was going to have to take care of myself after that. I had quite a great deal of freedom.

*College is often a watershed period in a young person's life; values and ideas are re-examined. Did you go through a self-examination during your college years?*

I was too busy having fun! When I was a sophomore, I decided I wanted to be a journalist. I knew what I was going to do; I had a goal set. Eventually, I was going to wind up in New York City on one of the big newspapers there. It didn't worry me too much about other things; I took them as they came. The decision that I made freed me for other things. We were having fun while we were getting an education.

*When you think back on that education, do you feel that the university gave you a solid preparation for a career?*

Oh, definitely! Yes. I took all the psychology courses I could take, because I thought that would fill in with the reporting, meeting people and interviewing them. It expanded my knowledge quite greatly and did a great deal towards pointing me in the right direction.



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## THE *LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL* IN THE 1930S

I graduated from college, and I decided I'd go down and break into the newspapers in San Francisco or Oakland or someplace around there. I always loved San Francisco. It was, in my estimation, the most ecstatic town in the United States. Of course, I hadn't seen very many of them. But the times that I was in San Francisco, I can remember almost as if I was reliving them right now. It might be that San Francisco was an entirely different town then than it is now. It was a truly western community. It was built by the miners from Virginia City: Sharon, Mackay, Fair, Flood, O'Brien. When anybody from Reno or Virginia City or Carson City was going down to San Francisco, they'd say, "We're going down to the city." San Francisco was the city as far as the western population was concerned.

I did go to San Francisco, but I couldn't get a job. I spent about 2 months down there in 1926. I never got in to see a city editor. It was real hard to get into a newsroom. If you didn't know somebody, you didn't get in, and I didn't know anybody.

I came back and had 2 or 3 jobs around Reno. Installing a heating plant at the university—that was the big one. That occupied me until I got onto the Nevada State Journal.

The reason that I got onto the Journal is that Joe McDonald, who was the business manager, I guess you'd call him, of the Journal, had gone to the university when I was doing this announcing. It was just about World Series time, and everybody expected the newspapers to give them the information about how the ball game was going on. Joe McDonald told the editor; he said, "Let's give Johnny a job announcing the World Series, because he's got such a good voice, and then make him sports editor after the World Series." That's how I went to work for the Journal in 1926. I worked there until 1929.

It was very strange the way I became editor of the Journal. The editor of the Journal was Osborne T. Buck. One year he was covering the legislature, and there was some big bill. I don't think it was the divorce bill or the gambling bill, but it was some other big

event. He got himself inebriated in Carson City and had a wreck. He missed the deadline that we had, because he was sitting on a big barrel that we used for a wastebasket. He just slipped into the barrel with his head and his feet sticking out of the barrel. I just had to take over. There was nobody else there who could take over and get the paper out, so I got the paper out, and I became editor of the Journal. I was there for 2 years: 1927 to 1929.

Governor Scrugham, who owned the Nevada State Journal at the time, sold it to a man named Fred W. McKechnie, Jr. from Marysville, California. As is usual with the sale of a newspaper, the new owner brings in his own editor, so that the action will be what he wants it to be. He brought in a new editor, and I was out of a job. It was quite a blow, because I had just been married about a year or so. I was married to Julia Klinge, who was a girl from Oakland and who went to the university in Reno. We were married, I think, somewhere in 1927 or 1928.

*After the Journal was sold, did you feel that Reno was a dead end for you?*

There was no progress seen in Reno. There wasn't any great amount of building, and there wasn't any great amount of promoting the community. Reno had so much more to offer than Las Vegas: they had Lake Tahoe and Donner Lake and the mountains and the skiing and all of that sort of stuff, and they didn't develop it!

Reno was a closed corporation. George Wingfield was the president of the most important banks up there. He made all the big loans to all the people. He was the kingpin, and George Thatcher and William Woodburn—who were attorneys in Reno—were his underlings. He controlled the political party through the fact that Thatcher

was the Republican national committeeman and Woodburn was the Democratic national committeeman. Their tentacles reached from Reno to Washington, D.C. Then George Mapes was there (George Mapes's son later built the Mapes Hotel in Reno).

George Springmeyer, who was a United States Attorney in Reno about that time, wrote a book, and he called the Reno organization "the Goldfield gang. Most of the people who were in Wingfield's aura had made their money in the mines at Goldfield. They weren't miners; they were businessmen, and I think there were a lot of gamblers in there.

I think Ed Roberts, who was a former congressman, was the mayor of Reno. You used to be able to tell him because he was dressed in a morning coat and grey trousers and a felt hat on the top of his head. I might also say that Roberts carried a gold-headed cane. He was a top figure in the city of Reno. He was one of the men who wanted to attract tourists to the community. He said, "If it's necessary I'll put a keg of whiskey on each corner of the downtown area, and the tourists can come in and have a drink any time they want it." But the Reno people did not develop the facilities that they had up there to attract tourists.

There was sort of a ring within a ring. The inner ring controlled the Reno politics, and the outer ring—Wingfield—controlled the national politics. In the Roberts ring there was William "Rags" Justi, who owned the bar on Second and Lake Street. He was a city councilman from ward one, I believe, in the Reno election set-up. He controlled all the downtown area as far as handing out jobs and getting into the inner ring. Frank Collins, who ran a hockshop on Virginia Street, was another man who you went to see if you wanted anything from the city, and his shop was the meeting place for the people



in the Roberts ring. The 3 of them pretty well controlled the city council. I don't think there was any underhanded stuff, but if you wanted a job you either went to Frank Collins or Rags Justi.

*Your father had connections with certain political figures during his working life. Did he have any connections with the Reno group?*

No. He was strictly state. I've forgotten how he got so close to Governor Sparks. I think the Cahlan name had something to do with it, because when I was going to the university I was able to work in the city engineer's office for 3 summers, and it was no problem. I got the job and that was it.

*You didn't see any future for yourself in the newspaper business in Reno?*

No, not at all. I did when I first went to work in Reno. I thought it would be my lifetime work, that I'd be living in Reno the rest of my life, until James Scrugham sold the paper to McKechnie.

*Was there any other newspaper in Reno at the time?*

Yes, the Reno Evening Gazette was run by the Sanfords. I never tried to get a position there.

The Depression came on in late 1929, 1930. I had been working on the Journal for a couple of years. I could hear rumors in the banking circles that something was happening. It was the loans to the cattlemen in northern Nevada that affected the Wingfield banks, which were all over the state except in Las Vegas. When the crash came, it just pulled the rug out from underneath the Wingfield interests. You could see that some people would go bankrupt.

There were more bankruptcies coming up at that time than there had been in the past.

People in Reno became a little more conservative than they had been. The merchants there in Reno were complaining about the lack of patronage. My family didn't have any problem. My mother at that time was teaching school, so they had to have the school teachers. And my father had jobs that were continuing jobs, like on the Saint Mary's Hospital. He was revamping and rehabilitating the Saint Mary's Hospital. They had their money, and it went along despite the oncoming depression. The Depression didn't affect me. I did lose some money in the Wingfield banks. I had deposits in the bank, and they closed the banks. [Acting Governor Morley Griswold of Nevada declared the banking holiday in November, 1932.—ed.]

I didn't know what I was going to do after the Journal was sold, and the Depression was coming along. When Fred McKechnie, Jr. came in, he told me that there was an airplane flying down to Las Vegas . . . and my brother was with the paper in Las Vegas.

It happened that a man by the name of Ray Boggs had an idea of putting in an airline between Reno and Las Vegas. He was going to fly from Reno to Las Vegas to find out a route that would be compatible with his interests. He had a mine at Carrara, which is about 10 miles south of Beatty. He wanted to see how the mine was coming along, so he invited several people to come down here, and I was one of the ones. I think Boggs foresaw that there would be tourist business between Reno and Las Vegas and that the quickest way to get there was by airplane. He brought about 6 people down here with him.

Roscoe Turner was flying the airplane. Roscoe Turner was a former airplane racer and had won the Bendix Trophy, which was the highest competitive trophy of aviation.

He'd won it twice. He was a man who flew the Gilmore company airplane. A little tiger cub flew with him. He was quite well known throughout the United States. He was a very dapper sort of a man: he had a waxed moustache, was tall and good-looking and wore a navy blue jacket and powder blue trousers with flying boots. Turner cut quite a figure wherever he went. Everybody knew who he was and who he was working for.

When we flew down here, it was the first semi-commercial airliner that ever landed in Las Vegas. The plane was a Lockheed Vega, which held 8 people and had one propeller-driven motor. The thing that made me remember the flight so much was that we landed at Carrara on a one-strip landing field. The wind was blowing, and we were coming down. As we got near the ground, a gust of wind hit the airplane and tipped it up on its side. I was sitting on the side that was closest to the ground, and I'll swear that man didn't miss that thing by more than 4 inches. It was my first flight, and it scared the dickens out of me! I didn't want to ride an airplane . . . I never did ride an airplane again until Bonanza Airlines put their airline in here between Reno and Las Vegas.

The next airplane ride I took was from Las Vegas to Los Angeles on Western Airlines. We got down over Mint Canyon, which was known then as the graveyard of aviation, because they had so many crashes down there. I can see why, because it was just bumpier than the dickens. I didn't care for it at all.

When I was a member of the Board of Regents in Reno, I used to ride the DC-3s from here to Reno. When you'd get up over Walker Lake, you'd get those thermals and bounce all over the place. I'll admit, I was scared in the airplanes. Coming back, I'd take the train from Reno to Ogden and from Ogden to Las Vegas. That was the only other

way you could get here. There were roads . . . you'd call them roads now, although they were not paved. They were gravel roads, and part of the road was over the railroad grade that was put in by the Tonopah and Goldfield Railroad.

My brother, Albert Edmunds Cahlan, was named after his grandfather on my mother's side. Al was 3 years older than I. My brother and I were very close. My mother rather turned me over to Al to see that I was properly supervised wherever we went when we were young kids. I became quite close to him, and he close to me. But when I came down to Las Vegas to work for him on the newspaper in 1929 I told him, "Now I don't want you to figure that because I'm your brother that I'm entitled to a lifelong job. If I can't do the job, fire me!" We seldom went to each other's homes for dinner or anything of that sort, but it was a very congenial association. He gave me a lot of information, and I gave him some.

*How did your brother happen to come to Las Vegas?*

He'd been down here in 1922, and he knew the community quite well. Al taught school in Las Vegas; he taught mathematics and coached basketball.

*What had attracted him to journalism?*

In college he was managing editor of the Sagebrush, and that gave him a little background in journalism, but he'd never been in the newspaper business until he went to Elko in 1924. He ran the Elko Free Press out there for 2 or 3 years. He came to Elko from Bartlesville Oklahoma, where he had put some of his engineering education in operation with the Phillips Petroleum Corporation. He left there and got the job at Elko and stayed there 3 or 4 years. He came

down to Las Vegas again when Frank F. Garside was going to buy the Clark County Review from a man by the name of C. C. Corkhill. It was a weekly paper. Shortly after that, they made it a tri-weekly.

*Did your brother have a connection with either of those 2 men?*

He made his own connection. My sister-in-law, who was Ruth Schuyler from an old-time family in Las Vegas, suggested to Al that he inquire, see if Garside would need a partner. I can remember Al making the long distance telephone calls from our house in Reno to Mr. Garside, who then was in Tonopah and had the Tonopah Times Bonanza. Al asked Mr. Garside if he'd like a partner, and they got together. Al came down here. The Review was a weekly paper when he bought into it, and then they made it a semiweekly.

Garside had been in most of the mining communities that surrounded Goldfield and Tonopah. It was a boom and bust community situation. They'd go up to the peak, and then the gold and silver'd peter out, and the town would become a ghost town. Mr. Garside, I think, was smart enough to see that Las Vegas was going to benefit greatly from Boulder Dam, and he made overtures to C. C. Corkhill, who was the owner of the Clark County Review. Al also saw the opportunities that could come from the dam. He and Mr. Garside reached an agreement. Al came down and he took over the end that was operating the paper. Mr. Garside would come down to Las Vegas maybe once every month or 2 weeks or something of that sort to see how it was getting along.

When the airplane ride came to Las Vegas, I had an opportunity to go sit down with my brother and talk to him. He said, "You

can come down here and go to work for the newspaper." When he bought the paper it was a weekly newspaper; then it went bi-weekly and then tri-weekly. It was just in the stage of changing from a tri-weekly to a daily—the Las Vegas Evening Review. Al wasn't able to take care of the daily chores of getting out the newspaper, getting the news to put it in.

*Did your brother have to convince you to come down here?*

No. It was about the time of the Depression, and people, if they had a job, they kept it. If they didn't have a job, they sure looked for one. I came down and took the job.

My wife had first refused to come down to Las Vegas, because she had heard of Las Vegas and what a town it was—it was too small. She'd been raised in Oakland and the San Francisco area, and she wasn't about to come to a building town, a little railroad town. But I finally convinced her that this was the place that we should come to.

I came down first and was alone for about 3 weeks. Jim Cashman and his wife and daughter, Tona (who is still around Las Vegas now), brought Julia down here from Reno. They drove down in an automobile, and Julia was more convinced that she hadn't ought to be in Las Vegas, because it took her so long to get here over the roads.

People in the city of Reno or northern Nevada would have been very happy if Las Vegas had seceded from the state. Some of them still hold that attitude. It was just so isolated that there didn't seem to be any possibility that it would grow. When I came down here first, I thought this was the least likely city to succeed of any of the United States. I made up my mind that I was going to stay here about a year, then try my luck back in New York or Chicago. But came the

Depression, and who had the tare to get back to New York?

*What finally convinced you that Las Vegas had a future?*

Dr. Roy Martin was probably one of the earliest and best boosters of the city of Las Vegas. He was one of the first people I met down here. He told me that Las Vegas someday was going to be a community of 50,000 to 70,000 people and that it would be one of the big spas of the United States because of its climate and because of the water supply that we had. The dam was part of the sales pitch, that the dam would carry us over until we could get into the tourist business.

*What did you see beyond the construction of the dam? Was it tourism that you thought would be in the future, even then?*

In those days I was living practically day by day, especially in the summertime, when it was so darned hot down here that you couldn't get comfortable. I just existed day by day . . . I didn't think too much of the future. As long as I was able to support my wife and myself, I was contented. I did have ambition, of course. After I got down here and was into the business for maybe 6 months, I saw the chance that I could make the Review-Journal the best newspaper in the state—that was my goal. I was the general roustabout. I got the news; I was the reporter. I made the rounds of the community every day, and that is one reason that my expectations expanded, because I was talking to people who had the same idea that I had.

We had the smallest office of a newspaper that I've ever been in. I had very few tools to work with. They gave me a 4-legged table

that had no drawers in it, no storage space or anything. They did put a typewriter on the desk so I could type all my stories, but we had no direct connection with any news service. I was the newsman, and it was my task to build the newspaper as we went along. It was sort of hit or miss. You had to fill the pages, and it was a 4-page paper. We had the linotypes, which set the type. Then the type had to be put into what we called the forms by hand, and it was the newspaper page. We had a foreman, Dick Lochrie, who came down here with Mr. Garside. Lochrie had 2 or 3 young kids who were working with him. We just made out the best we could with what we had on hand.

But I saw the possibility of building the newspaper. There was a syndicate known as the NEA Syndicate, which provided editorial cartoons and a continuing novelette, I guess you'd call them, and some feature stories. I persuaded Al to get that service. All our daily news came in what we called a "pony service." The pony service was about 250 to 300 words a day over the Union Pacific telegraph. The pony was put in what we called "cablese." It would put 2 words together so it wouldn't cost so much on the telegraph—downplay for play down. Downplay was one word, and play down was 2 words. They connected the 2 words together so it wouldn't make sense. Sometimes it was like reading Arabic. I had to fill in the information that I had from this pony service that we got from the United Press in Los Angeles.

About the time that we started in being a daily in 1929, the teletypes came into service. The teletypes were in the United Press office in Los Angeles, and they served 24 hours a day. The teletypes came in big rolls about 4 inches thick. I got the bright idea that if we could get what we called the overnight service, which picked up on the news of the

day before and then gave us a lot of feature stories, that if I could get that up here, we'd have it made. I could pick up from there and use whatever we needed. So we made arrangements with Western Air to pick up the roll of teletype from United Press, who took it out to the airport. I'd go out to the airport and pick it up.

There were a lot of people who came in here in those early days who told me that we had the finest small newspaper in the state. I tried to make the newspaper the best small-town newspaper in the United States. I had several letters that commented on the content of the newspaper.

I was a very avid sports man, and I tried to make the sports stuff as good as that they could find anywhere. I wrote columns that I think were as good as some of those that were in larger newspapers, mainly because I had a background in sports. The first few years I was at the Review-Journal, my main interest was sports. I read every magazine on sports that could be obtained. I was known in many of the Pacific Coast newspapers—the Examiner in San Francisco and the Times in Los Angeles. I knew all of the sports editors of the majority of the newspapers along the Pacific Coast.

As we went on further and I became more or less of a managing editor, I did all the reading I could, things like the National Geographic and magazines that would give information of the various eras during the development of the world. I tried to read as much as I could to become interested, informed about what was going on around the world.

*Do any particular authors come to mind?*

No, not necessarily. I think that most of my reading, as far as authors were concerned,

was who the authors were and whether I knew them or not. One was on the Denver Post for a long time and then became a novel writer. He wrote *Good Night Sweet Prince*. [Gene Fowler.-ed.]

For the first, oh, 10 years of my service down here, the main news stuff came from local news items. I wrote all the stories and took care of the overnight stuff in the Los Angeles area until Florence, my wife, came to work on the newspaper. That was quite a job, I can tell you.

Al would write the editorials, and he was the business manager, and he would sell ads. About 1930 Al started writing "From Where I Sit." One day he was in his cubbyhole office and he started in saying, "It's time to think, the walrus said," and went on from there. He started his column with that saying. I've forgotten where it came from—one of the authors. Al wrote most of the editorials. I didn't have anything to do with them, because I didn't exactly know what the policy of the newspaper was. He took care of the editorials; outside of that, I took care of everything else.

*What was the role of the paper in a small town? What did you think the newspaper could do for the town?*

Keep the town informed, and in elections try to convince the people who's the best man in the races. For quite some time we had editorials and boosted people who we thought could be elected, or should be.

*What were your brother's goals for the paper?*

He believed the same as I did—that we should make this the best paper possible. Any time there would be any controversy as far as



writing a story was concerned, I'd confer with him. I can remember one time I wrote some story about the Catholic church—something about the Catholic religion, but I've forgotten what it was—and I was a little leery of printing the story. I asked Al about it and he said, "Call Father Lamb," who was the pastor of the only Catholic church in town.

So I called Father Lamb and discussed the story with him, and he said, "It's all right. Go ahead . . ."

That is what we tried to do. If there was any controversy in any area between the politician and somebody else or between 2 organizations, we would try to get their story and compare it with the information that we had and make any corrections that they thought were good, and we agreed. It was more or less of a family affair as far as the community was concerned.

I could tell you that if I was an editor today and some of these investigative reporters turned in a story like they turn in to their editors now, I'd throw it in the wastebasket, because it would not have anybody to quote as having said these things. "It is rumored now"; "Reliable sources say . . ." If we couldn't quote the reliable sources, then we wouldn't print the story, because they could make up a story and give it to us, and we would rely on them. We felt that we should be the leader in the development of the community, that if there were some good ideas that needed boosting, we always gave it that. If they weren't any good, we dropped them. The Review-Journal at the time that it was built was more or less a voice of the people. It wasn't our idea that came out. It was stuff that came out of the city commission, county commissioner or wherever, and also in the editorial columns that we ran. We ran one column by Drew Pearson, who was on one side of all the national news, and

Westbrook Pegler, who was an iconoclast. That was the theory that I had in developing the newspaper.

*I know that Florence Jones, whom you eventually married, was a help on the paper and played a part in the paper's development.*

Florence not only was a help on the paper, but she was a savior, believe me! She graduated from the journalism school in Missouri and came directly from Missouri out here. Her father had bought a service station out at Whitney, which is now East Las Vegas, and she came out here. Cliff and Herb were her 2 brothers, but they were still in school. They did not come at that time. They would come in the summertime to work on the dam. Herb worked in the Anderson Mess Hall, which was the big feeding place out there. Cliff worked on the dam.

Mrs. Jones, Florence's mother, became a good friend of Mrs. Garside. Mrs. Garside had been reading proof on the newspaper for quite a little while and she got tired of it. She got Mr. Garside to hire Florence. At the time I didn't agree very much with having a woman around the newspaper office. It just wasn't the place for them. I had been brought up that way. There were very, very few women reporters. Well, there were some, like a gal that Hearst sent around the world—Nellie Bly. They were the exceptions. People like Hedda Hopper and a gal who was working for the Examiner were exceptions, because they were reporters of Hollywood. As the newspaper functioned at the time I was actually in the newspaper business, a woman was not usually accepted. But Florence came in to read proof, and she read proof for about 2 days. Then I sent her out on a story, and she went from there. She became one of the finest women newspaper reporters that I ever knew. She was the only

reporter that we had up to the outbreak of the war.

She and I became a team. I'd sit down with her every morning and ask her what was the routine for the day. Then we'd go out on the beat and come back, and I'd ask her what she had, and I'd tell her what I had. We'd put the 2 of them together and lay out the paper that way—lead story. If we didn't have a lead story between us, we'd use some other story that came over the United Press.

*Las Vegas was a Democratic town in the 1930s; the power structure was Democratic, and Roosevelt was pushing for organized labor. Yet, you were opposed to the Wagner Act. How did you handle that conflict in the paper?*

We never let it bother us. The only thing we could do was to say it's the law, and it would be best to abide by it.

*How did your brother, Al, handle it editorially?*

He skirted it very nicely and would take the individual operations as to when the organizers came in here and what they did. The majority of the people in Las Vegas were anti-union, but, according to the Wagner Labor Relations Act, they had to abide by the law. It got worse when they had strikes down at the Review-Journal in later years. The thing that the Review-Journal tried to do is to not tell the people how to think, but think about it.

*If you could summarize the Review-Journal's stand on organized labor, how would you do it?*

Well, it was semi-anti. I mean, we were not crusaders, but tried to give the people information that would let them make up their own minds. I think I told you that 2 of the columns that we had in the paper—one of

them was Drew Pearson, and the other one was Westbrook Pegler—were just completely opposite. So we ran it in the paper, and they could read it and make up their own minds. We didn't feel that we were in a position only at election time to tell people how they should think. We went along and did what we thought was best for the community. As far as the Review-Journal was concerned, the community came first. The development of Las Vegas was the most important part of the editorial policy of the Review-Journal.





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## LAS VEGAS IN THE 1930S

When I first saw Las Vegas in 1929, I thought that it was least likely to succeed as a growing community. At the first instance, my impression was that. It had been a railroad town, and the rails held all the political offices and stuff of that sort. Then I got in contact with Doc Martin and Jim Cashman and Frank Gusewelle and Gus Blad, and some of the leading citizens of the community. They convinced me that Las Vegas did have a future, that after Hoover Dam was completed they'd have tourists coming in here to see the dam.

When I came, Fremont Street was the only paved street in town, but it was only paved down the middle. You parked on each side of the pavement. It was paved because it was part of the state highway. On the southwest corner of Main Street and Fremont Street was the Hotel Nevada, which later became the Hotel Sal Sagey, which is Las Vegas spelled backwards. It later became the Golden Gate Casino. Across the street was the Overland Hotel, which was a 2-story wooden structure. Most of the buildings were wooden. Sears Roebuck had a 2-story brick building on the

alley between Main and First Street, and the Mesquite Grocery Store was on the southeast corner of First and Fremont. Those were about the only 2-story buildings in town. All the rest of the buildings were practically shacks. The First State Bank was on the northwest corner of Fremont and First Street. Then there were shacks all the way along down until the Boulder Club, which was a 2-story wooden structure. Everybody used to joke that if the bookends—either the First State or the Boulder Club—were burned down that all the little joints in between would collapse and disappear. The downtown part of Las Vegas didn't change very much in the thirties—not until after the forties. It was well occupied by bad buildings.

Housing was very, very bad as far as anybody coming here to go to work. The railroad built the houses on First, Second and Third streets. They were pretty well built. Quite a few are left on Second and Third Street. Las Vegas was a typical small village.

I lived on Bridger Street, about a block away from the high school. I had a house;

it was a lousy house. It was a wooden structure, and it probably was good for the air-conditioning, because those wooden houses would clear up temperatures much earlier than the brick houses would. But it still was a hot house. A lot of times I'd take the mattress off my bed and put it in the front door and open the back door so that the least little breeze would come through, so you could get some sleep.

The majority of people would go out and take their blankets and maybe a picnic to the Union Pacific park. That, at the time, was just about the largest green spot in the community—either there or on the courthouse lawn. They would leave their homes and go out there and sleep until maybe 1:00, 2:00 when it cooled off, then go home to get the rest of their sleep. I used to combat the heat by going home in the afternoon after work around 4:00. I'd fill the bathtub with cold water and get in and soak in the cold water until the sun went down and it became dinnertime. Then I'd get up, go and have dinner downtown.

In the summertime the population was mostly males—very few women here, except those who had to stay. Most of the people at that time were members of a family that worked on the Union Pacific Railroad, and they got passes. Most of the women and kids would get on the train and go down to the coast and stay there until September and come back when it cooled off.

*Would you say that generally there was a sex imbalance in the town? I know that for the state as a whole there tended to be more men than women, especially in the smaller towns.*

Well, yes, and that was because of the railroad community. Men would come here alone rather than bring their wives, bringing

them here after a residence was found. The people up at the dam were mostly males, and women came out later. There were a few but not many women in town.

*Were there any other ways people tried to handle this unusual environment?*

No, they just existed. It was a situation of existing through all the bad weather to take care of the good weather. It was a little more than uncomfortable; it was really something bad . . . And there was dust. One real estate man said that when the wind was blowing from the south, he'd say, "Well, real estate's moving up towards Moapa, and here it comes back from Moapa, going back to the coast." They'd joust about it. I'll tell you that the people who came here and stayed for any length of time just existed. They were real pioneers, believe me!

Some people would go up to Mount Charleston over the weekends; some people had cabins up there. They would send their womenfolks and their kids up there for the summer, and they would commute between Charleston and Las Vegas. The road wasn't very good, and it would take you maybe an hour to get from Charleston down to Las Vegas. It was worth it for the people who were able to have cabins up there.

Speaking about the heat, the few doctors who were here never performed any operation unless it was an emergency. They would ship their patients down to Los Angeles or Salt Lake City for any ordinary operation. It was too hot! The heat would generate infection. If they did operate in an emergency, they'd set the operation for 3:00 or 4:00 in the morning and line the operating room with ice, so that it would be cool enough to operate.

Hospitals were very crude. When I first came down, the one hospital that was here

was over on Third, just off the street that runs past the courthouse . . . Ogden, I guess. It was a 2-story hospital and they had recovery rooms for patients that weren't terribly ill. Dr. Hemington, who was the grandfather of state Senator Mahlon Brown, was the Union Pacific doctor. He performed all the operations that were necessary up until the time that there were a couple of clinics. Dr. Martin had a clinic, and Dr. Mildren had a clinic across the street from the courthouse. That's where my daughter Virginia was born. [Virginia is Cahlan's daughter by Julia Klinge.—ed.]

I remember that I had a collie dog that became ill. Where did I take him? Dr. Mildren who had the clinic; he prescribed for the dog. There were about 3 or 4 doctors here and a couple of dentists. But if you had any trouble with your feet, there were no chiropractors in town. There was one man who used to make the circuit of all the small towns around this area. He'd come about once a month or every 2 months, and everybody would line up to get their feet fixed. There were no facilities here at all. When the community started to grow, very few professional people would come here.

*You mentioned that your first wife was very reluctant to come to Las Vegas. How did she find life here? From a woman's point of view, what were the difficulties?*

She assimilated pretty well. She joined a lot of the organizations that were here. I mean maybe 2—the Mesquite Club . . . . And we used to play bridge all the time. The biggest problem that she had in the house was cockroaches. They were just as prevalent as ants. The house next door to us, which was in the same section—all owned by the same guy, Fred Munson—was made out of railroad ties. As the railroad ties rotted, the cockroaches

moved in. Being right next door to the shelter, they came in our place. She had an awful tough time with the cockroaches.

*Where did people get the kinds of things that they needed for daily use—groceries and that kind of thing?*

They had grocery stores: the Blanding place, the Boggs brothers. There were 2 or 3 stores. But you very seldom could get fresh vegetables, because nobody grew them here. The closest place that you could get vegetables and fruit was St. George, Utah. As far as food stuff was concerned, it was pretty expensive because they had to bring all their stuff in from the outside. Blanding had a ranch over on Charleston Boulevard where they butchered a lot of animals for meat. That was about the only one; all the rest of the stuff used to have to come in by rail.

There was a man here by the name of Don Borax, who with his brother, a fellow by the name of Smith, opened the first big marketing mall over on Fifth Street about 1932 or 1933. It was a large, all-purpose deal. They brought in fresh vegetables and stuff of that sort and ran the first produce trucks into Las Vegas. They'd unload at the store, and you went down and bought them in the store. They were doing such a good business that the oldtimers here were slowly going broke. It was about the time that they were paving the highway between here and Los Angeles. They started digging up Fremont Street, which was just about 50, 75 feet in front of the merchandise mart that these 2 people had opened up. They kept it torn up for maybe 3 or 4 months, so that nobody could get into the mart, and they went broke. That was part of your Las Vegas ring. But both of the people who opened it, Don Borax and Smith, were still here. Don Borax went onto the police force, and I don't

know what the Smith boy did. Don Borax died about a year ago, but the son of the Smith that was in this grocery business is still around.

*What about stores such as Penneys and Sears? You mentioned that there was a Sears and Roebuck here.*

Yes, they were here, and Penneys also were here. Adcock and Ronnow was probably the biggest store in town. It was a department store. Bill Beckley had a haberdashery store on the corner of First and Fremont where the Pioneer Club is now. Las Vegas had enough to take care of the railroad people, let us say. There was very little variety.

I can remember at the Adcock and Ronnow store—they were both Mormons; we had a large Mormon population here . . . comparatively large—that any time that they would get any new dresses or material of that sort, they would call all the members of their family, and the members of the family would come down and get first pick. The Mormons are very close.

When we had a house over on Charleston Boulevard, I had a lot of lawn to mow over there. I guess I was the first one who had a machine mower. Anytime it broke down or anything, I was in trouble, because they had to send down to San Bernardino for all the parts and bring them back here. Getting car parts was not a problem. Bob Kaltenborn brought the general auto parts here in about 1935, sometime around the opening of the dam. Jim Cashman had the General Motors franchises, and he had a garage over there. And the Arrowhead Garage was on Fremont Street about where the Four Queens is now. That was run by M. E. Sullivan. He was about the only auto mechanic who was in the community.

*From reading the early years of the paper, I get the impression that there were distinct areas of town—for example, North Las Vegas and the Westside.*

North Las Vegas didn't start in growing until the dam came in and they built shacks out there to live in. There was a gal by the name of Ma Glancy, who had a beer joint down there, and then there were bootlegging joints in North Las Vegas. As a community, it was sort of the lower-class people who settled down there. It was considered shantytown. There wasn't 'much out there—scattered homes.

I don't mean this in any derogatory way, but it's a shame that the 2 communities couldn't merge into one. They had an annexation deal in the city that would have annexed North Las Vegas. That was just about to come to a vote, when they found out that North Las Vegas had a \$5,000 bond issue that had to be paid off. That's why they didn't annex North Las Vegas.

The Westside was originally laid by J. T. McWilliams, who was a civil engineer. He decided that the railroad was coming in, so he'd build a community. The only trouble was he built it before the railroad line came in. What people were over there, they had their business places built on skids. When the railroad came in, they just moved over onto the east side of town. Only those who couldn't afford to move out lived over there. It was a shantytown. They mostly had wells. They had no indoor plumbing—cesspools. There wasn't enough assessed valuation over there so that they could pave the streets; the city couldn't do anything.

*You lived in Las Vegas, and the railroad supplied your water; is that correct?*

The railroad set up a company that was known as the Las Vegas Land and Water Company. It wasn't the best running water, because sometimes you'd open the tap and little tadpoles would float into the sink, because it was an open reservoir. Kids used to go out there swimming. Finally they got it closed off. It's that big tank out there that's covered over, just in back of the offices now.

*When you came to Las Vegas were there any black families?*

Yes, they were mostly railroad porters and stuff of that sort. There were some local residents; they lived down across the street from Block 16. This was on the east side; Block 16 was the red light district.

*Did blacks live on the Westside, or did that come later?*

Some of them did, but they congregated across the street from Block 16. They were segregated of their own choice, however, I think, because we never had any policy against the blacks.

There was some segregation in Las Vegas. The schools were not segregated. Of course, there was only one high school here. They had a grammar school on the Westside, which was mostly black. Then they all went to the same high school and played football together. As far as the people were concerned, there was no segregation. There was a colored lady who ran a chicken shack down on Third Street, I think it was. Everybody used to go down there for Sunday dinner. As far as the people themselves were concerned, they didn't make any discrimination.

They did have a special section which was reserved for the blacks in the El Portal movie

theater. I am not sure whether the Majestic Theater, which was owned by Cragin and Pike, who also owned the El Portal, was segregated, because I never was in the place. Just about the time I came down, they closed the Majestic. When the hotels first started up in the 1940s, all the black entertainers couldn't stay in the hotels. They had to go over on the Westside.

*Did they have their own places of entertainment—bars, clubs and so forth?*

No. They made their own, as most of the residents of Las Vegas did in those early days. I used to see some of the blacks over at the prizefights that we had and some of the baseball games. We formed a softball league here, and the white and the blacks played softball together on the same team or other teams. The blacks came to the ball games. Anytime there was any football games or thing of that sort, the blacks were accepted; they made no segregation. They'd sit in the same bleachers as the whites did.

*Would you say their economic position was . . .*

Lower class. I can remember bootblacks and porters in barbershops.

*Do you know whether they had a church or a minister of their own?*

Yes, I think they had a couple of churches when I first came down here. I knew the pastors of both of them, but I've forgotten their names.

*Would you get news from them?*

Oh, yes. It didn't make any difference whether they were black or white. We would

classify blacks in the newspaper columns as Negroes. That was common all over. When that went out of style by virtue of the local laws or whatever, we would put in their address. You knew exactly where they lived and that they were Negroes.

There were quite a few Mexicans who lived over here, also. They congregated in the same area as the blacks. They were on the railroad, most of them. They were usually rail setters and common laborers.

*Do you recall any tensions between those 2 groups?*

No, not at the time. This was a very placid community. Before the war, no problems. The only industry that Las Vegas had was the railroad, and they employed the blacks and the Mexicans. They were accepted as part of the community.

*Were the Mexicans segregated in the theater in the same way that blacks were?*

They didn't have any special sections, but they preferred to sit where the blacks were.

*Did Mexicans have their own institutions—church, social clubs . . . ?*

Most of those Mexicans were Catholics, and they went to the Catholic church because it was the only one in the community. And they were accepted. It wasn't like it is now. The people of the city of Las Vegas didn't look down on them; they just didn't associate with them—that is, fraternize with them, let us say.

*They wouldn't frequent the same bars and restaurants?*

[chuckles] Well, they would have to, because they were the only ones in town.

*What about Indians?*

Very few Indians. Up until the 1940s I don't remember seeing very many Indians in the area. They were usually on the reservation. Moapa was one of the places where the Indians lived. There was a reservation in Las Vegas, but it was maybe a block square. That was down on Main Street, about where the hill goes down into North Las Vegas. I think they were Paiutes. There were tepees down there like the Indians had in the old days. They were sort of circular tents . . . pyramid tents that went up, and that's where they lived. I think the Indian community was fluid. Some of the people from Moapa would come down here and some of the people from here would go up to Moapa.

*What did Indians do for a living there?*

I can't tell you what they did, because I never knew.

*Did you ever go into the reservation area to cover the news?*

Very seldom. There were no knifings there or anything of that sort. It was against the federal law to sell liquor to an Indian. That was going on since the Civil War.

*Did Indians have social relationships with blacks and Mexicans?*

No, they stuck to themselves.

*You talked about Mormons earlier. What was their role here?*



The Mormons originally came here in 1855 and settled here because it was part of Brigham Young's empire that he was going to build between Salt Lake City and the Pacific Ocean. He sent a group of Mormons down here to teach the Indians the Mormon religion and also to assist the travelers on their way to Los Angeles. This was on the Old Spanish Trail. That is where it started. Some of those people, a majority of them, were called back to Salt Lake City by Brigham Young when Johnson's army was coming west to see that polygamy was no longer allowed in the area. Some of the Mormons settled here and maintained residence here after the other people were called back.

The Mormons did dairy farming up at Moapa and Logandale, in that area, and then came to Las Vegas to get their education. There were quite a few Mormon merchants in Las Vegas. Ira Earl ran a coal and ice business here. He also was on the county commissioners for a while. The Ronnows were here, and they had what was the old Clark County Wholesale, which originally was set up by Ed Clark as the Clark County Forwarding Company. He used to forward machinery and stuff of that sort to the mines in the Tonopah-Goldfield area.

Mormons took an interest in politics; they were quite active. There were some Mormons on the city commission. They became members and outstanding leaders on the Chamber of Commerce; I know that Marion Earl became president of the Chamber of Commerce. There were a few schoolteachers, doctors and lawyers. Mormons engaged in most of the stuff that was good for Las Vegas. They were a very forward-looking people. They were active in the community and built their church as they went.

When I first came down here, there was one stake—that is, the one area where they congregate. They built stakes quite regularly; they'd open one maybe every 5 years. As a result they became a good part of the community. They were much above the ordinary people economically. I mean like the Indians and the . . . I don't mean to compare the Mormons to the Indians or the Negroes, but they were quite a few steps above. I wouldn't say they had any goals for Las Vegas; I don't think that they thought that they could take over Las Vegas, but they became a part of it, and a very great part of it.

If you wanted anything done for free you could go to the Mormons, and they'd help you out. It was just helping each other as they went along. They had . . . I think what they called a bishop's place, that anytime a Mormon would get hungry or anything, go over to this place, and they'd supply him with food. When they first started the federal help, the Mormons never would join. They had their own social security place. You very seldom see any of the Mormons asking for any of this federal aid. They would help outsiders if they'd get stranded here. You could go to the Mormon church, and they'd give you enough gasoline to get to the next place.

*What about relationships between the Mormons and non-Mormons?*

No great cleavage. They were part of the community and accepted, just like the Methodists and the Baptists and . . . The non-Mormons would usually call on the Mormons for help when they needed it.

*The 2 people who came in to start the market that you spoke of . . .*

They were both Jewish—Smith and Borax (pronounced Boray). Borax, afterwards, became chief of police here for a couple of years. They came from California; I don't know the town.

Where I first came down here there was only one Jew—Nate Mack. He had a junkyard down on Main Street, which now is Las Vegas Boulevard—I don't know whether it's north or south. Later there was a man by the name of Golden who came in here and opened a hockshop. He was quite active in the American Legion. He had lost an arm in France, and he became the leader of the legion band. He was quite active in the community service.

*When did the number of Jews increase?*

I would say after the dam was started and Las Vegas began to grow. There was a furniture store here, and I've forgotten the name of the guy that ran it. There were several furniture stores here that were run by Jews. As I say, they were all community minded also.

They had a visiting rabbi here in the thirties. Nate Mack was one of the leaders of the Jewish community, and through him, I believe, they got a rabbi established here. I think it was around the forties.

*Were any Jews on the Chamber of Commerce?*

There were members. I do remember that there was one Jew who was Exalted Ruler of the Elks Lodge.

*Were they on any of the county or city boards?*

Not until lately.

*What were social relations like between the Jewish newcomers and the Las Vegas business community that existed?*

Some of the Jews were accepted very well. Others were rather shunted aside. It was just their reaction. The Jew who became the Exalted Ruler of the Elks Lodge left town overnight with most of the Elks Lodge funds. There were several incidents of that type.

*What about competition with local merchants?*

They had to sharpen their pencils. Of course, that wasn't only among the Jewish community, but it was among the gentiles as well. Any new businessman coming to town was an endangered species. There were no pickets. There were jealousies, but they were accepted as merchants. Fanny Soss, a Jewish woman who now is better than 100 years old, came in here and opened a dress shop. The people went to her store because she had the best.

*In one case that you talked about, the town was quite successful in getting Smith and Borax to give up their business by tearing up the road in front of their market.*

They did that deliberately. There were no other incidents that I can recall like that. As the town expanded and as the population became varied, nobody paid much attention to whether they were Jewish, Indian, black, white or whatever. If they supplied a better service than somebody else, they'd go to their store.

The power structure of Las Vegas in the 1930s was headed by Ed W. Clark, who was president of the bank and president of the power company and president of the telephone company. He was generally accepted as the leader of the community. Also, he was the political leader; he was a Democrat. Ed Clark was to Las Vegas what

George Wingfield was to Reno. He controlled most of the economy of the community through his banking facilities. As his was the only bank in town, he could, if he so desired, control the politics, because there were a lot of high-powered politicians who had loans in the bank. Ed usually chose who he wanted as members of the city commission and county commission and those powerful bodies. (There was one thing about Ed Clark: during the time that Roosevelt closed the banks and had a banking moratorium, Clark closed his bank one day and then reopened the day afterwards and remained open all the way through the moratorium.)

Ed had a lot of satellites. Lee Ronnow was one of them—he was in the bank. Gerry Crowe was in the bank; Cyril Wengert was in the bank. They worked for Clark. While Ed was a Catholic, he was quite close to the Mormons in the community. I think that it was his friendship with the Ronnows. . . they were Mormons, and some of the rest of them. I think they were just friendly—some of them more friendly than others.

*Did he admire them for their integrity or honesty . . . ?*

That I can't tell you definitely from my own experience, but I would concede that he did, because he had them in the bank, and that's where the money is. Of course, there were a lot of other people—non-Mormons—who came in here and went to work there also. Johnny Beville was one of them, and Rogers Haygood, who was in the bank. There were quite a few outsiders who came in. That was the time when the community was showing signs of growth.

When Al came down here to run the newspaper, he became very close to Ed Clark; Al was his lieutenant, I would say. Al

controlled the American Legion because he was state commander and quite active in the post here. Between the 2 of them, they pretty well controlled the politics of the community. When Ed was a Democratic national committeeman, Al was sort of his gofer boy—go for this and go for that—and they became quite close together. At the time of Ed's death, Al became a national committeeman and followed more or less Ed's ideas. I think that you can say that Ed Clark and Al Cahlan were the 2 most powerful people in the 1930s and early 1940s.

I wasn't one of Ed's satellites, but he was very friendly with me. He also was a news source, who I used to talk to at least 3 or 4 times a week. He knew everything that was going on, because he practically controlled what was going on. As far as he and I are concerned, we were friends. As far as I can remember, we never sat down at any place and discussed things; he and Al did.

Jim Cashman was the General Motors dealer here. He had Cadillacs, Buicks, Chevrolets. He came here in 1917 from Kingman, Arizona, I believe. I think he came originally from Missouri—I'm not sure of that. I know that Frank Gusewelle came from Missouri. He was a Texaco oil dealer here, and he was a cousin of Jim Cashman. I think Cashman got Gusewelle to come here.

Archie Grant and my brother were both members of the American Legion. Archie was a Ford dealer and came here about 1928. I believe he came from California. He became quite active in the political field. Archie was a very fine and very intelligent man, but a very poor politician. Archie lost almost every election that he ran in. I think he ran for county commission. Archie was elected state senator in 1941 and had a very fine record while he was serving up there. He was reelected.

*Why do you think he wasn't more successful in running for office?*

Very frankly, because he was so chintzy with money. One time he was out in Elko, and he went into a bar where there were 10 or 12 people. He told the bartender, "Set them up for all the patrons you've got in here! I'm Archie Grant. I'm running for governor." He said, "Set them up and give them beer." His attitude on everything that he did was saving money for himself. Now, I can't give you any specific deals. He was that way, and he didn't change.

Archie tried to run for governor in 1934. [He unsuccessfully sought the Democratic nomination again in 1954.—ed.] I think that it was Ed Clark and my brother who got him to run. That was a schism in the Democratic party. Harley A. Harmon, who was a lawyer down here, had quite a following. He was one of the pioneers of Las Vegas. Archie ran against Harmon. When Archie filed against Harmon, that broke up the Cashman combine. Cashman supported Harmon. For quite a long time Jim Cashman and my brother didn't speak to each other. It's just 2 leaders butting their heads against each other.

Frank Gusewelle was Jim's cousin and came to Las Vegas with Jim in about 1917. Frank and I were very close friends. When I was Exalted Ruler of the Elks, he was district deputy, and he and I used to talk about the politics of Jim and Al. I got Frank Gusewelle to work on Jim, and I worked on Al so that we'd get them pulling together. They were both trying to get to the same place, but they were going a different route. We finally got the feud stopped, and they became friends again. It was a political feud, entirely. They'd argue over everything. Both of them were very stubborn. It came to a point where if Cashman was supporting one person, Al

would be supporting the other one and vice versa. It was quite a feud!

There was a tremendous fight throughout the 1930s between Senators Pat McCarran and Key Pittman for control of the Democratic Party in Nevada. My brother was on one side, and Jim Cashman was on the other. Their feud lasted several years. These 2 guys who had been fighting so desperately against each other got back together again through Frank and myself. They weren't getting anywhere butting heads. If they got together, they might be able to do something, and they were able to do something.

*Did people in town know about the feud?*

Oh, yes. It was talked of at any meeting. In any political meeting you had to have one side or the other battling.

*Did you see any danger in this?*

No, not necessarily. They weren't trying to tear each other down. They were just mad because one was for Harmon, and the other one was supporting Archie Grant.

*Do you think Cashman was envious of your brother's power?*

No. Jim knew that he had power, because he'd been there since 1917. I think he was county commissioner at one time, but outside of that, he'd never sought political office. Jim was a man who could call somebody on the phone, and rather than asking them to do what he wanted them to do, he'd demand that they do it! When they were building the original Cashman Field, if that had been built with paid labor, it probably would have been out of the ability of the city to build it. But Jim got all the materials and got the labor

unions together, and they contributed their work to build the field. I know of one call he made to the Portland Cement Company in Victorville. Jim told the guy down there, "I need a carload of cement. You send it up to me so it will be here on such and such a date." And sure enough, here came a carload of cement. He had that kind of power. He was a very powerful man. When his funeral was held, the mortuary was not able to hold the crowd that they had there. They filled the aisles and even overflowed outdoors.

Archie Grant, Ed Clark and my brother were the leaders of the so-called "newcomers." Jim Cashman was the leader of all the old-timers. It was a clash of the people involved.

My brother and Archie Grant were very close together. I think that Archie was Al's adjutant when Al was elected state commander of the American Legion. Archie didn't have the stature for gaining power. He was a very fine follower, but he didn't quite meet the leadership appellation. It was strange, because, every job that he was appointed to, he did a very fine and outstanding job—very capable man. He had a lot of brains.

Walter Bracken was the manager for the Las Vegas Land and Water Company and extended his power over the water users and land owners. Roscoe Thomas ran a shoe store here, I believe, and he was on the city commission for quite some time. Al Corradetti was in the cleaning business. He served on the city commission and was quite powerful in some areas.

Bob Griffith's name should appear quite prominently among influential citizens because he was one of the big boosters of the city of Las Vegas. Bob's father brought him down here about 1907 when he was constructing the Las Vegas school on Fifth Street (it is now the Federal Building). Bob remained here until his death.

One of the sidelights of Bob Griffith's life and how his and mine intertwined: I went to the university and was in the engineering department, and Bob was the manual training man who taught us—or tried to teach us, as far as I was concerned—the building of small things like taborets. We had to build a step ladder. He saw I was having an awful tough time, and he came over to me and said, "John, I don't think you could saw a line straight." He said, "I got a job for you." So he put me to work sanding a cedar chest that he later gave to one of the citizens here in Las Vegas. That's how I passed the course. Had it not been for that, I probably still would have been at the university. But Bob came down here, came back from the university. He was one of the earlier residents of Las Vegas who went to the university in Reno.

Bob came back to Las Vegas from the university about 1926. He and a friend of his opened up an automobile dealership. The Chamber of Commerce lost their secretary, and they named Bob secretary of the Chamber of Commerce. He probably was one of the best publicists as far as Las Vegas is concerned. People would come to Bob for advice.

Bob had some friends in Los Angeles—a fellow by the name of Froelich, who had the Ford dealership in Los Angeles, and there was another man who had a lot of apartments. He got them interested in Las Vegas. Another friend of his was Slim Barnard, who wrote travel articles for the Los Angeles Examiner. During the building of Boulder Dam, we got a lot of publicity in Los Angeles from his friendship with these people. Bob was a member of the Shrine later. In his Shrine connections, he got a lot of publicity for Las Vegas. Bob Griffith was probably the number 3 man as far as publicists were concerned. He was a very fine, upright citizen, very interested in the development of the city of Las Vegas.



*Did these influential people live in the same neighborhood?*

No, but most of them had businesses close together. And the Elks Club was the center of activity for the city. Al was an Elk, but he didn't attend the meetings; he was more interested in the Rotary Club. Al was very interested in the Chamber of Commerce, also. I think he served on the board for quite some time. Al had power. I didn't pay any attention to power. I was building the newspaper. Florence didn't get into the political arena and into those connections until after the dam was built. Cliff Jones [Florence's brother] was in the power group after the dam was built. In the early 1930s, of course, Herb and Cliff were too young to do anything.

Let me say that the Review-Journal was the mouthpiece of the power structure. It reflected the ideas of the power structure. That was one thing that a lot of people didn't like about the paper, that we were too much involved with the big shots of the community and not as much involved with the railroad, which built the town. When we'd get those complaints, we'd try and answer them and tell them that if they had anything that they wanted in the newspaper, all they had to do was call us.

The power structure didn't rely on religion too much. I don't mean they weren't religious. The First Methodist Church was the first church in Las Vegas, and then the Catholic church came in. The Baptists and the Episcopalians—I don't remember exactly which one came next. It was a very religious town. The Mormons, of course, were here. As I remember it, they didn't have a church. When they moved the Baptist church down onto Ninth Street, the Mormons took that over, and it's one of their churches. The church didn't meddle much with the development of the

community. They did develop the religious portion. Most of the people who lived in Las Vegas had a selection of churches.

As far as I know, nobody used their church affiliation except at election time. Then they would have candidates on the ballot and would work for them. The Mormons were especially active in doing their work. They'd get people from their own group to run. For quite some time the Mormons controlled the political situation down here. Yes, you could say that they voted as a bloc, because they did get lots of positions in the county and the city. There was always at least one Mormon on the county board, and at least one on the city board. But there was no concerted, overall action as far as the churches were concerned, except at election time.

Of course, when I first came down in 1929, the railroad people usually dominated the election process, and a lot of their members were in the political positions here. Harley Harmon was a former member of the union, and he became county clerk. Then in his county clerk business he studied to become a lawyer. He later became district attorney.

The power structure of the community probably involved three organizations: the Elks Lodge, the Rotary Club and the Chamber of Commerce. All of the wheelers and dealers were in at least one of the organizations and sometimes in all three of them. Usually what one organization did, the other two joined in. That was the success of the Helldorado celebration, which they had here after the dam was finished in 1935. The Chamber of Commerce were very active and had real good ideas, and I don't think that the city of Las Vegas would have grown half as fast as it did if it hadn't been for any one of the three of them—Chamber of Commerce, Elks and Rotary.

Jim Down and Bill Stenwick and myself were the organizers of the Junior Chamber of Commerce in 1935. It became one of the power structures of the younger generation. They would attack problems that the Chamber of Commerce would not be interested in. There was Guild Gray and Ed Stone and Frank McNamee, John Beville and practically all of the younger people-younger leaders.

The Junior Chamber of Commerce did a lot of things that the older power structure didn't accept, but we went ahead and did it anyway. We developed the road to Mount Charleston and the ski area up there. The Chamber of Commerce had never thought of it. They were old-timers around here. Usually, when the Junior Chamber of Commerce came up with anything, the Chamber of Commerce really accepted it, and everybody joined in . . . that is in the earlier days.

The Junior Chamber of Commerce brought the first large convention to the city of Las Vegas; that was 1936, I believe—'35 or '36. It was a regional convention of the Junior Chamber of Commerce. We went down to San Diego and got the vote that we needed. We brought them in here when there were only 2 hotels in the city. Rooms were at a premium! We finally got them so that they could sleep in their Pullman cars. The Pullman cars were sidetracked over on the Union Pacific yards, and that's where a lot of the delegates stayed. The Sal Sagev and the Apache were about the only 2 hotels that they could stay in, and we had about 1,500 or 2,000 people here. We didn't know whether we were going to make it or not, but we finally did.

The Junior Chamber of Commerce brought in the first college football game; that was 1938, '39, I guess. We had the stadium sold about half out. We had to guarantee the teams so much. It started to rain about 12:00. I remember it cleared up about 12:30, and

the game was supposed to start at 1:30, so everything was all right. When we started in counting the money, we came out 50 cents to the good. We just skimmed by.

*I understand that Las Vegas almost went to municipal power in the 1930s. Do you recall anything about that?*

Very well. Leonard Arnett was running for mayor. Johnny Russell and Leonard Arnett—now, which came first, I can't tell you. [Arnett was elected in 1935 and Russell in 1939.—ed.] Both of them were elected. They started a campaign for municipal power. I'm sure of this: that it was in Leonard Arnett's regime that they started the ordinances to make the utilities publicly owned. They beat the drums that it was time for change. Arnett was the white knight who was leading the city of Las Vegas into municipal power. And, again, that was an issue when Johnny was elected.

At the time Ed Clark was president of the power company, the bank and the telephone company, and none of the 3 of them were exactly up to city standards. Ed Clark's clothesline—that was the name that was hung on the power company, because every time it rained, the lights went out, and it was more or less of a patchwork deal. In the early times in Las Vegas—I don't know when they ceased this deal—you didn't have any electricity during the daytime, because they generated it with a big generator up on the Union Pacific area that they called "Big Betsy." Whenever you'd hear "Big Betsy" you could turn on your lights and get power.

See, this stuff goes clear back to 1905 when they did the best they could with the implements that they had. And the implements that they had were very few, because Las Vegas was a very isolated place



until the 1940s. I think Ed Clark just was doing the best he could without interfering with something else. They had no one who had a great deal of knowledge about how to run a power company. This is the thing that most people can't understand when they come into Las Vegas now and see all this greenery and all the equipment that we have now: the telephones, the telegraph, the radio and the television. None of that stuff was available to us at that time, because, as I say, it was an isolated community. And the people who ran the utilities and the stores and all of that stuff were not familiar with the methods of operating whatever they were operating.

Ernie Cragin was also a candidate for mayor. He was part of the power structure, and had been mayor before for 10 years—3 or 4 terms, I guess. Ernie Cragin was a very popular leader. I think that he was the head of the warehouse for the Union Pacific and had quite a lot of power within the Union Pacific. How it came about, I can't tell you, but he did. He and Bill Pike owned the two theaters in Las Vegas: the El Portal and the Majestic and the outdoor theater. They were partners, see. They had an insurance business—Cragin and Pike—which still is in operation. The 2 of them were quite active in the operation of the community.

Cragin was a very popular man. He used to referee prizefights down here and do anything that the public wanted him to do. He became so popular that he ran for mayor and was elected and reelected for maybe 5 terms. I think he had the longest term as mayor of anybody except possible Bill Briare, who is mayor now. Ernie Cragin was a very amiable, a very fine person. No, I don't think he had any great vision for Las Vegas. He never talked to me about any great vision. I knew Ernie quite well, because when he was refereeing prizefights, I was there covering

them for the newspaper. In fact, I used to talk to him when I was writing a political column. I used to talk to him about the things that he knew in the political field and get information from him.

Leonard Arnett ran a drugstore here, and I don't know what Johnny Russell did. I think Leonard Arnett came here in the late or middle 1930s. He hadn't been here very long. I think he had been here maybe 5, 10 years. He operated the Boulder Drug Store on Fremont Street. I can't remember exactly when he came here, but he was considered a newcomer. His presence also was felt in the formation of the Junior Chamber of Commerce, which could come later. But Russell . . . I don't know where he came from. He came out from under a rock, I think. Johnny Russell was a nobody. Nobody knew who he was.

Nobody figured that either Russell or Arnett had a chance, and they didn't get out and work very well. The municipally owned power people won the election, then. Russell was elected. It was a complete package—not only power but telephone and water—everything . . . public utilities. That was about the time, during Russell's tenure as mayor, that we were being frightened by the communist infiltration, in the late 1930s.

*How did you feel about the possibility of municipal power?*

In the first place, I didn't like either one of the candidates—either Russell or Arnett—but I wasn't too sure that public utilities might not be a good idea, because the service of all of them was just absolutely terrible.

*You and your brother didn't agree on that issue?*

No. That was the main topic of discussion for about 2 months! They were pro and con.

I mean not only me, but anyplace you'd get in a meeting of any kind, it usually wound up talking about municipal power. Al saw he couldn't convince me, and I saw I couldn't convince him, so we just went along—he wrote the editorials and I wrote the news. I just printed the editorials as they came. (One thing that I never allowed in any of the columns of the Review-Journal is any personal opinion in the news columns. If we had a personal opinion, it was to appear on the editorial page . . . always.)

Arnett was elected on that issue, and it became quite an issue in the campaign, because it put the newcomers in a position where they would be able to control the community and take it out of the control of the First State Bank—Ed Clark, as president, and all of his satellites in the political field. It was a big blow to everybody who meant anything in Las Vegas.

There were a lot of people who were disgruntled because of the way Ed Clark was operating his utilities; they were quite numerous. Even families would be divided, like our families were. The women'd be for Russell or Arnett, and the men'd be for Cragin. Florence didn't get much into the battle out of that; she left that to us. The dispute lasted for maybe 3 years.

*You had some interest in municipal power, but you opposed Russell and Arnett. Why didn't you go with them?*

I didn't think that they were the kind of people who I wanted to support. It was just that I didn't believe that they should be elected. It was no great quarrel at all, not even when Leonard Arnett socked my brother in the chin and knocked him down on the street about municipal power. It wasn't a fight; my brother had an artificial leg, and

Arnett popped him on the chin, and he fell. Municipal power split the town right down the middle.

There were a couple of people who thought that municipal power should be pushed through, and they went out and crusaded for it. They were a clique of their own. I think Busick was here at the time and some of his cronies. And, of course, both Russell and Arnett had their cliques. Labor was behind them; I think they were pretty active. As I recall it, the unions were for Russell—the railroad union and the other ones which were lesser lights at that time. There was a battle between the Review and the Age, because Bob Squires took the attitude that municipal power would be a solution to all the problems we had down there—not only municipal power, but municipal utilities.

One of the supporters of both Arnett and Russell was Bob Kaltenborn. Bob came out of San Bernardino; he had an auto parts store down there. He came to Las Vegas in the 1930s; I'm not exactly sure when. When he first came here, he was sort of a renegade, politically. I don't mean to challenge his integrity . . . He joined with Arnett. Arnett was for municipal power, and Bob thought that was a real good deal. After he was here maybe 10 or 15 years, Bob apparently saw the light and joined the Chamber of Commerce, and he was president of the Chamber of Commerce when Ria Gable came here to get her divorce.

Bob Kaltenborn was a very good friend of Bob Griffith. He and Bob Griffith were together in a lot of things that the community did to get the name of Las Vegas into the newspaper datelines and so forth. Bob was very, very much a booster of the city of Las Vegas. Bob Griffith was one of the potent insiders.

*I noticed that a man named James H. Down ran against Cragin and Arnett. Do you remember him?*

Oh, yes, very well. Jimmy Down, his son, worked at the *Review-Journal* for many years as advertising manager. His father was rather a recalcitrant sort of a guy; he had his own ideas. The elder Down had the Studebaker franchise here for years, and then he ran a Texaco station at Main and Ogden.

*Who backed Mr. Down?*

More or less Mr. Down. He didn't have a great following. He had been city commissioner for some time, but people apparently didn't want him as mayor. He got very little support. I think he finished third. He was an independent sort of a man. He was behind the municipal power.

I never was real close where I could sit down with Jim and discuss these issues or anything of that sort, but I considered him a friend because of his son. His son and I were very close, and he was one of the founders of the Junior Chamber of Commerce. We were connected that way. When Florence was alive, the younger Jim's sister used to call every time she got to town. She moved out of town, but I don't know where. The family was close to us.

*Municipal power was actually put to a referendum vote. The citizens of Las Vegas voted in favor of municipal power. How did you vote on that issue?*

I voted for the municipal power. I didn't vote for Arnett, but I voted for the municipal power, because, at that time, I thought municipal power would be much better than the power company that we had. I didn't do any great campaigning, and I wasn't writing

the editorials in the *Review-Journal*, so I didn't do anything there. You can say I was behind the scenes.

*Did you ever talk to Ed Clark about it? Did he know of your stand on this?*

Oh, yes. He knew. He didn't show any reaction to me. [chuckles] I never went in for a loan, so I don't know what he thought. Al was sort of half and half. He believed the same as I did: that if Ed Clark would correct the problems that they had with the power company, it'd be all right. But if he wasn't going to do that, down the line it might make a difference. As far as we were concerned, it was definitely a civic issue.

*You also told me that Mayor Arnett left town rather abruptly because of the municipal power crisis.*

Yes, he left here practically overnight and went to Petaluma, where, I am told, he bought a rather large chicken ranch. As far as the people who knew him knew, he did not have the kind of money that would purchase a lot of land in California. There was a rumor around town that he was bought off. I don't want to get into that area because it was nothing but a rumor. Nobody knew whether it was Ed Clark, whether it was Ernie Cragin or who it was. But Arnett did leave town overnight, and he established himself in Petaluma as a chicken rancher and had, as I understand it, some power down there. I don't know whether he ever ran for any office down there.

I tried to put 2 and 2 together: here is a man who was for municipal power, and the powers that be were against municipal power, and Arnett left here without telling anybody. I guess he told his wife and daughter, but nobody knew that he was going to leave.

He sent a telegram from Petaluma as his resignation. As anybody would do, we tried to put 2 and 2 together, and came up with the answer. The answer that we figured was that he was bought off.

*After Arnett resigned, what was the reaction of the power structure?*

Oh, they just went along as they did before Arnett became any problem. I think Al was very glad that Arnett had left, because, as I told you earlier, Arnett had smacked him in the jaw with his fist and knocked him down.

*Obviously, Las Vegas never did get municipal power, even though it was supported overwhelmingly.*

No, because the power structure, I think, used a little pressure on Ed Clark, but they never got any better facilities until the power company changed hands. They were a progressive outfit, and they started installing good facilities. I would say that was in the early 1940s, and it took a lot of time, because Sam Lawson was the manager of the power company under Ed Clark, and Sam had no vision at all. He thought that Las Vegas was always going to be the same as it was when he was alive, and that they didn't need any better power than they had then. He was sort of a stumbling block to any sale, but they finally sold the power company, and I have forgotten who came in here with it. They started restructuring the whole system, and it took about 5 years or more to get it done. I guess just before Ed Clark died, they split it up, and they became separate entities.

As long as we're talking about electricity, there is a very interesting story about a man by the name of Bill German, who was on the city commission. In 1910 . . . 1915, the city

commission was figuring an ordinance that would put all the electrical wires underground and eliminate all these things that we have now. German voted against it. I don't know the machinery of it, but I think it had to be a unanimous vote. He voted against it, because, he said, "The first time we have a rainstorm, the whole community will be shocked with electricity." That's the reason that you've got all of these poles here. A lot of the people decided that it would be better to have them underground, but they couldn't get Bill interested, so he blew the deal.

*Do you have any regrets that municipal power didn't become a reality in Las Vegas?*

Well, as it turned out, I think it was a good thing, because the Nevada Power Company is doing a really good job now. I think that you get much better service if a private corporation is operating any of your public utilities. We get real good service now, and the cost is not too much. We never had too much deal with the cost of power, because we got power from Boulder Dam, the Southern Nevada Power Company. (I can't remember when they started in generating this power from other places. I think they did get some from Boulder Dam.) Of course, nobody bothered too much about electrical costs, because you paid for it. You were living in the desert, and if you didn't get any power service, you couldn't live. The power company has been very good about putting together things that will make it easier for the residents to use equipment. When the cooling systems—refrigeration—came in, they were behind it 100 percent. Of course, it meant more money for them. The thing that I think people should know and should remember is that in the desert your utilities are worth whatever it costs you, because where do you get it anyplace else?

That's what made the city of Las Vegas what it is today, because we had the facilities here. The only thing that had to be done was to upgrade them. These private people came in and upgraded them and everything. When you take a look at what Congress is doing these days, you're very happy when you've got private business operating things.

*Your brother and his group were tested twice in the 19305 with the elections of Arnett and Russell. Looking back over that period, how do you see those 2 episodes? How critical a time was that?*

It was an uprising. I mean the local people were split as to the advisability of a city-owned power company. The Review-Journal made a lot of money through the ads that were run. There were full-page ads that ran on the advisability of municipal power and anti-municipal power. It was a threat, but it didn't work out Las Vegas at that time was growing, not as rapidly as it did later, but it was growing, and people coming in saw the structure that was in the community. The Arnett and Russell backers weren't too happy about not being in themselves, so it was quite bleak days. I think the trouble with Arnett and Russell strengthened the association of the Clark/ Cahlan regime.

I don't think Las Vegas got very much out of the New Deal. We didn't pay too much attention to the edicts that came out of Washington. The merchants and the people of the city of Las Vegas thought that Roosevelt was out on a limb, because they didn't think he could enforce the NIRA. [The National Industrial Recovery Act, passed in 1933, was designed to stimulate economic recovery through a series of codes governing business practices. In 1935 the Supreme Court declared

the NIRA unconstitutional unless interstate commerce was involved.—ed.]

*Did any merchants participant in the NIRA?*

Oh, yes, they'd go along—they'd put the Blue Eagle in their window and forget everything that it meant. [The Blue Eagle was displayed to indicate that a business was complying with NIRA codes.—ed.] You see, that was the time that the dam was being built. As far as Las Vegas was concerned, there was no great amount of pressure on the merchants, because the dam people were in here, and they were employed, and we just went along as best we could.

I think we got money from Washington to put in the sewer lines and things of that sort—the utilities that we would have. The Civilian Conservation Corps was very active here. They did a lot of stone work on the road out at Boulder City—from Boulder City to the dam, and then they built the road from Charleston up to Lee's Canyon.

There's a very interesting story about that road. When Roosevelt came in here to dedicate the dam, September 30, 1935, Claude Mackey was with the PWA [Public Works Administration] or WPA [Works Progress Administration], whichever it was that built that road. When Roosevelt finished his speech at Boulder City and was coming in from Boulder City to get on the train to leave, Jim Cashman and Claude Mackey wanted him to go up and see what had gone on and where the federal money had gone as far as the WPA was concerned. They drove up there, and they ducked their civil service protection outfit. The only problem was that they had this big car—a big Cadillac. They drove to the end of the road, and there was no way to turn around. Mrs. Roosevelt didn't



know where he was; the Secret Service people didn't now where he was. So, for about an hour and a half, the United States didn't have any president. They got him out, sat him on one of the big rocks out there. This driver that they had jackassed that Cadillac around until he finally got it turned around and headed in the right direction. They held up the special train for about 45 minutes before he got back. The Secret Service just didn't know what to do, because they hadn't told them anything about it. I was down at the train waiting for them to come back. It was quite a story. Jim Cashman told me.

*How would you evaluate the kinds of projects that Las Vegas got through the New Deal? Did they add a great deal to the community?*

I would say yes, that they did their part in developing Las Vegas.

*Was Las Vegas eager to get that money for the projects?*

Well, I don't know that they were eager, but they would accept it. They figured if somebody else was getting it, they might as well take it.

*You've told me that there were some very specific things about Roosevelt's program that you did not go along with.*

In my estimation, the Wagner Labor Relations Act took the power of operating any sort of a shop out of the hands of the employers and put it into the hands of the employees. Any private organization should have the right to operate his establishment in the way he believes is the right way to do it. I mean, the unions just got control of

the United States from that Wagner Labor Relations Act.

*Were there any 010 organizers who came to Las Vegas?*

Oh, sure. They flocked in here, because they wanted to organize as soon as they could—organize everywhere they could. There were the labor ghouls that came in to get control of whatever outfit they could—laborers, plumbers, mechanics and the whole schmeer. I guess that the union people felt the Wagner Act was a good idea. But I know that the people of the state of Nevada didn't accept it, because they passed the Right to Work bill here in 1952

*Perry Kaufman has written a dissertation on Las Vegas. He argues that, between the completion of the dam and the onset of World War II, Las Vegas was stagnant. He cites the city's failure to attract a single major hotel. He says that no major investors were interested in taking a chance on Las Vegas. Now, how do you respond to that?*

I would say that the investors were not too interested in the community, because it had only grown from a little railroad town to small town stature. There weren't any people who were interested in investment here. What was there to invest in?

We built probably more hotels in the columns of the Review-Journal than any other newspaper in the country. They'd come in with these grand ideas and maybe sell stock and light out, or maybe they'd just fade out in the distance. It was our idea that if we could get a major hotel in here, that others might follow. And the banks were a little reluctant to lend money to any of these investors. Of

course, whenever you get a community like Las Vegas that showed signs of growth, you had all the con-men in the country coming in here. There was a big real estate boom here between 1936 and 1940. I say a boom . . . they were selling land off maps. Where the land was, there was no water, no facilities, no way of ever getting any water or sewage or electricity or anything. So, it was stymied pretty well.

*Would you say that this period between 1936 and 1940 was a time of worry about the economic future of the town?*

Well, there was some worry. But, as I said in the beginning, Las Vegas was built on faith. Everybody that came into the community sooner or later got a good dose of faith. We didn't worry too much about it. There were some people who went bankrupt and couldn't make it, but if they could make it, they were very, very welcome. I would say that the time between 1936 and 1940 was somewhat of a regressive area, economically speaking. I don't think it was a depression, but it wasn't as good as we'd had it during the building of Boulder Dam.

The football coach at the high school, by the name of Frank Butcher, was the juvenile officer for about 2 years before I came down here, and he was killed in a fire here in 1930. Judge Orr, who was a very good friend of mine, and a few other people suggested that I take the position of juvenile officer. It was a part-time job at that time. You don't have to devote all of your time to it; you just took care of the cases as they came up. I guess they thought I was available. I was juvenile officer for 10 years, from 1930 to 1940.

*Did you have good relationships with kids in town?*

Oh, yes. I was sports editor among other things, and I used to write about the football, basketball, all their athletic stuff. And I used to be the starter for all the track meets that they had down here. So I had rapport with most of the kids in the school.

There were 2 kids who I remember especially. One of them pretty near broke my heart. He was a young fellow here whose father had died, and his mother was alcoholic. His sister, who was about 4 or 5 years older than he, tried to keep the family together. They didn't have any money, were very poor. He used to get in jams of stealing things. He was doing all this burglary and robbery. He used to sneak down the back alley so nobody would see him. He was a typical tramp.

Judge Orr and I talked to him 4 or 5 times about what was going to happen to him. He just didn't stop, and finally we told him that he was going to a reform school. It was just when the war clouds were gathering. About that time he decided maybe if he could get into the Marine Corps that he would straighten out. We told him that if he would enlist in the Marine Corps, we'd wipe out all of his court records that he had so that he could get into the Marine Corps. We got him into the Marine Corps.

I'll never forget the time that he came back to Las Vegas in his Marine Corps uniform. The kid walked up Fremont Street just as straight as a string; he was very proud of the uniform he wore. He came in and talked to me and told me how much he appreciated the fact that we had let him join the Marine Corps. When he went back to his unit, he joined the paratroopers and was training at Fort Bragg. I used to get letters from him every once in a while.

When the war broke out, the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor. His unit dropped into Guadalcanal. I got a couple of letters



from him while he was over at Guadalcanal. The last one said, "I've survived 2 Japanese attacks, and I hope that I'll be able to survive the others." On the day that I got that letter, I was looking at the teletype, which we had in at that time, and I saw his name as one of the casualties.

I didn't think anything about it until maybe 4 or 5 years later. I was out at the Desert Inn golf tournament. I was in the press tent, and I was paged to come to the entrance to the tent. As I went out to the entrance to the tent, here stood a woman, who was his wife, and a little boy about 5 or 6 years old at the time. This woman said, "Mr. Cahlan, I want you to meet the son that Clyde never saw." I just broke up. Every time I think of it, I do the same thing, because that was one boy that I rehabilitated. Judge Orr and I rehabilitated him, and I'm very proud of that fact.

*Were his problems typical of the kinds of things you saw?*

Yes, it was. There were pranks that these kids did that did damage. I can remember another time when they had a graduation over at the Las Vegas High School. There were 3 or 4 kids who were outside; they broke a lot of windows and some headlights on automobiles and so forth. I caught up with them. They were the sons of some of the most prominent people in the community. They turned them over to me, and I said, "All right, you boys want to break things. Now we'll see what kind of wood sawyers you are." They had a unit of the jail outside, over on the Westside. I told the manager of it, I said, "You take these kids, put them out where the sun is shining bright, give them some dull saws, and make them saw mesquite wood for a while. We'll see how they like that." If you've ever tried to saw any

mesquite wood with a sharp saw., if you try to saw it with a dull saw, you've got a job on your hands. They were out maybe a couple of hours in the sun, and they had blisters on their hands.

They came over to me and said, "Mr. Cahlan, if you'll just get us out of here, we'll never give you any more trouble."

I said, "Well, I don't know that I can do it, because the city judge has just sentenced you to 10 days at hard labor, but I'll see what I can do." Of course, I could've excused them right then, but I made them think that this was something pretty good. I went back over about noon. They had blisters on their hands; their faces were all sunburned. They made a pledge, and I never had any trouble with them after I let them go. Of course, if the American Civil Liberties Union had been in existence at that time, I'd've had some problems on my hands. It taught them a lesson that I don't think they ever forgot.

The Westside kids used to give me a lot of trouble, because they'd be stealing a lot of stuff. I remember one of the kids over there (I won't name him; I won't name the police officer either), but he got in so many jams that I took him before Judge Orr. We decided that the best place for him would be at the Elko reform school. I had to serve papers on his mother. His father was a police officer, and I took him into the chief's office. He and I were the only ones in the place. I told him, "I'm going to have to send your son to the reform school."

He reached down inside of his hip down there, pulled out his revolver, stuck it in my stomach and said, "Over my dead body!"

And I said, "Yes, Joe." We didn't do anything to the kid because I was really frightened. I wasn't so sure that he wouldn't look me up and take me to the reform school instead of his son.

I think there are 3 of my kids whom I had dealings with—not necessarily juvenile delinquents, but whom I had a little effect on when I gave them advice—are now on the district court bench: Tom Foley and John Mendoza and Myron Leavitt. They were kids who I came in contact with. There was no crime committed as far as these kids were concerned, just . . . well, pranks.

*When you came down here in the 1930s, was there any other newspaper?*

*Las Vegas Age.* Charlie Squires was the publisher of the *Age*; it was a Republican paper. It worked from a weekly to a daily about 1931. Charlie never was able to collect any great amount of money. He always had fine ideas: he had the first hotel in the city of Las Vegas; he had the first soda fountain; he had the first telephone company. But he just missed on all of the things that he did. Charlie Squires was quite widely known by Hoover and some of the people that operated back in Washington, D.C. He was postmaster of the city of Las Vegas, and he was on the Colorado River Commission when they signed the bill to build the dam. So he was quite well thought of in Las Vegas.

*Why did his paper eventually fail?*

We just ran them out of business. They couldn't compete, because they didn't have the kind of funds that the *Review-Journal* had.

*Do you remember any of the important Republicans he backed for office?*

Important? No Republican was important, as far as Las Vegas was concerned. The thing of it is that there weren't many Republicans involved. Even the state committee would say

that we can hold our convention in a phone booth. It was 3 or 4 to 1 Democratic.

*Garside bought the Age in 1944; publication was suspended in 1947. When you bought the Age, did that leave your paper as the only one in Las Vegas?*

Yes. Governor Scrugham, who I worked for in Reno, came down in '31 or '32 and started the *Las Vegas Journal*. (I think he picked the name out of the *Nevada State Journal* in Reno.) That lasted about 6 months. It was sold to Al and Mr. Garside, and the name was combined: *Las Vegas Review-Journal*. And then when we started putting out a paper in Boulder City—I mean we printed it in Las Vegas in our print shop and trucked it out to Boulder City—we published a separate front page for it: the *Boulder City Journal*. That was all during the dam construction. It remained until after the dam was completed and we quit putting it out.

Then there were a couple of other outfits that came in here. A couple of Jewish people came in who started papers. There was one paper that was run by a man named Fink, but I can't remember . . . One of them, we thought, was a communist. They thought they had a better product than we did. They lasted about 2 months, I think. I don't remember the names of the papers. They didn't stay in business very long.

*How did people entertain themselves in your early years in Las Vegas?*

Florence was responsible, quite generally, with bringing some culture into the community. She developed the Columbia Recording Artists, which was a group that the Columbia Records sent out as sort of an entertainment deal for people that didn't

have a chance for entertainment. They brought in the Trapp family and several others . . . the Russian ballet, and things of that sort. The LDS church had an auditorium that would seat about 50 or 75 people, and that's about what they would get to the concerts or whatever they were putting on. They were very successful in bringing these people in.

We had the theaters—the movie theaters, and we had softball. Our softball league was composed of the younger kids of the community. There used to be about maybe a thousand people at the ball games. We got lights put in. The city commission put lights in the park. Whatever entertainment that we had in Las Vegas in the early days, up until the 1940s, we had to make ourselves. And that goes for the Helldorado. The Elks Club started the Helldorado, and it grew from a small party to something elaborate. There were floats in the parade that cost \$40,000 or \$50,000. The hotels on the Strip would vie for the trophies.

*You have talked about clubs that the men belonged to—civic clubs. You also mentioned a couple of social clubs that the women had.*

There was the Mesquite Club, which was the club, I guess you would say, of the elite old-timers. They were the wives of the merchants and the politicians and the upper crust. They'd just have a club meeting every week, I think, and conduct the business, outline something that was needed in the community. They'd try to take care of it—tree planting and stuff of that sort.

There was the U-Wah-Un Club. I think it was a club that was organized to compete with the Mesquite Club. I'm not sure of that . . . . It was sort of a reading club. Then the Eagles Auxiliary was part of the Eagles Lodge; it

was the women's auxiliary. There was the American Legion Auxiliary, and that kept them busy.

Originally, Block 16 in the plat that the Union Pacific drew up was the only place in the city that could sell liquor. As the town grew, there were a couple of people here who saw the possibility, and they brought in some prostitutes. The prostitution angle of Block 16 grew until I guess there were maybe 50 or 60 gals in town. People didn't pay much attention to it. Of course, some of the churches like all the churches all over the United States, opposed it. But it was accepted as far as the general public was concerned. It was one of the sights that the visitors were taken to see. I knew the people who owned some property down there and built the structures. I could, but I won't give any names.

I am pretty sure the prostitutes were on a circuit that ran through California, Nevada and I don't know where else. There was one gal down there by the name of Vera, who was in the Arizona Club. She was queen of the block, and whatever she said went. She kept it under pretty good control, and no problems. If anything went wrong, the police'd go down and tell Vera about it and she'd correct it. There were a couple of murders committed down there . . . .

The prostitutes didn't share any of the events of the local people. They stayed mostly to their own places. They would go out to Lorenzi's resort to go swimming. If any of the feminine gender of the community saw them, they wouldn't go in swimming. They didn't pay too much attention to it, except where it might have affected them personally—like this swimming deal.

*How about your wife, Florence . . . how did she feel about them as a group?*

Oh, she accepted them, because they were part of the community. She didn't care for them, but she accepted them.

As far as prostitution is concerned, it has been with Nevada ever since it was a territory. Anytime there were 200 people around, there was prostitution. I made a survey of prostitution—the history of prostitution from the Phoenicians on up to the present time, and wherever you went, you had prostitutes.

The only reason that the Block 16 was eventually shut down was because of the air force. The young kids would write back to their mothers and fathers and tell them, "Oh, I went down to the prostitute line and saw all the girls down there." The mothers or fathers would write their congressmen. The congressman would talk to the Department of Defense, and the Department of Defense would tell the air force to shut it down.

*When you were a reporter in the early days, did you cover that block?*

I didn't cover the block here. I did cover the lines in Reno. Dope was being peddled up there in Reno, and the pimps gave them a lot of trouble.

In the late 1930s The Meadows was built by Tony Cornero and his 2 brothers, Frankie and Louie. It was out where the present Montgomery Ward store is. There was a little nest of nightclubs out there, and the Corneros decided that that would be a good place for a hotel, because it was on the way to the dam. They would get tourists going to and coming from the dam.

It was about the time that the city commission and the city were about to turn loose the prostitutes and run them out of town. Cornero promised that if he came up here and built the hotel, he would see that it was run correctly and everything, but he

would have to have control of the prostitution, the gambling and the liquor. And there was a leading legal firm here in Las Vegas, which I will not name, who made a promise to him, but the firm could not come through with their promise.

There had always been a movement to remove Block 16 from the history of Las Vegas. That is the history of prostitution all over the United States, or all over the world. Some of the church people would get real hot about it from the pulpit; they'd deliver their sermons about it and get the people whipped up. There's a movement to get them out of town, and then they can't get it past the city commissioners or county commissioners or whatever, and they still remained there. So, it was no great deal; only Cornero was supposed to have control of them. For a time, there was quite a little tear among those people in the legal firm, because Cornero was a hood and knew how to use a revolver. He was in gambling off the coast of Los Angeles. He was not with the mob. There was no mob connections as far as Tony was concerned. The Corneros came here from Long Beach.

Almost overnight, one of the members of the law firm disappeared. Nobody knew what happened until he popped out as a district judge in another county of the state of Nevada. (I'm not sure, but I think he's still alive. If he isn't, he died in the last few years.) This attorney who disappeared was the front man for the other attorneys. When they couldn't pull a deal off, why, they just said, "You'd better leave town. And we'll see that you're taken care of where you go . . . ."

I think Tony just got tired of fighting the California authorities. They'd raid him about every 2 or 3 weeks, and he'd have to fight them off. They passed ordinances that the motor boats couldn't run from Long Beach to the

gambling boats. They went off to arrest him one time, and he fought them off with fire hoses.

*Can you tell me what happened to The Meadows and the Corneros?*

Well, The Meadows was sold. I don't remember to whom it was sold. It was turned into a house of prostitution, or a hotel of prostitution. Then all of a sudden it burned down. Tony Cornero was shooting craps out at the Stardust when he dropped over dead. It was about 5 or 6 years later. Frankie was killed in an automobile accident, coming down from Charleston. Louie picked out one of the fairest beauties here, and she became his wife. They moved up to Petaluma, where he has a winery now, I believe.

The Meadows was sort of a mission-type building. As you walked in the front door, there was a big room on the north side of the building and another room on the south side of the building, which were divided by the hallway. On the north side was the dining room and the entertainment room. They had regular entertainment out there. They had some pretty top names. On the south side was the gambling casino and a bar. It wasn't luxurious, no. But it was very comfortable. It became the social center for the city of Las Vegas. Locals would patronize it. Anytime they wanted a party—a birthday party or anything—they'd go to The Meadows.

Everyone was wondering why the dickens Tony didn't use chips. He used silver dollars. Nobody could figure out why. The reason he used silver dollars is that if anybody tried to heist them or anything, they couldn't get away with very much money, because a bag of silver dollars weighs a lot of pounds. They couldn't run very fast with a bag of silver dollars. In the start of the gambling on the Strip they used silver dollars.

There was a nest of night spots out there near The Meadows, which provided restaurant service and bars and some gambling, maybe a table of craps or twenty-one. They were nightclubs that were visited by most of the people who were in this area. There was the Green Shack, which still is in existence. That was one of the places out on the Boulder Highway. The Cactus Garden probably was the fanciest of the clubs that were out there. The Cactus Garden was owned by Paul Warner, who later became an assemblyman and served a couple or 3 terms. There was the Red Barn, the Black Cat, the Cave—which was built into a regular cave. It wasn't a very large place, but it was attended. There were a couple more that I can't think of right at the moment. Those were night spots that the people of Las Vegas and the people in Boulder City and along the way in visited as their entertainment spots. They had dancing. Of course, they didn't have any bands or anything. They were dancing to the jukeboxes. I believe the Cactus Garden did have one act to present for the entertainment of the people. That nest out there was quite well attended. It was, of course, about the time that Prohibition was repealed. [The Twenty-First Amendment ended Prohibition on 5 December, 1933.—ed.] Some of them had been operating out there during Prohibition. That was the "Strip" of the 1930s and early 1940s.

There were some places out on the Los Angeles highway, which now is the Strip, like the Players' Club and Frank Deodotta's place. He was a piano player who opened a nightclub/restaurant just off the highway. I would say it was back of where the Sands is now. A man with a name I cannot remember put in this big bingo palace, which had no other gambling but the bingo operation. Later it turned into the Sahara Hotel. Hoot Gibson of the movie cowboy fame opened a place on

the west side of the railroad tracks, which was known as the D 4 C. It wasn't the "divorcee"; it was the D 4 C. That was a nightclub that he operated for quite some time. It wasn't any great success. I was never out there myself, so I can't tell you anything about it. It was visited by the people who wanted to continue on during the night. Of course, during the war they put on a curfew for drinks. At 12:00 the bars were not supposed to serve any of the military personnel, and most of them observed, but they did have these night spots that didn't pay any attention to the law.

When the Strip started, of course, there was nothing left for these places. They operated, I would say, for maybe 4 or 5 years in the late thirties and early forties and during the war. The movie industry discovered Las Vegas during that time. They found the nightclubs to be very comfortable. Of course, they didn't have much of a hotel business at that time. The Apache Hotel, which is where Binion's Horseshoe is now, and the Sal Sagev, which was with the old Nevada Hotel on Main and Fremont—those were about the only legitimate hotels that we had.



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## THE CONSTRUCTION OF BOULDER DAM AND BOULDER CITY: SOME SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES FOR LAS VEGAS

*Do you prefer the name Boulder or Hoover Dam?*

As far as anybody who was here in the 1930s and worked on the dam, it was always Boulder Dam. When the original project was passed by the Congress, it was known as the Boulder Canyon Act. The dam was supposed to be built in Boulder Canyon; that's why it was the Boulder Canyon Act. But the engineers saw that Black Canyon was a much better site for the dam than Boulder Canyon, so they moved it to where it is now. In the 1930s and from then on, it was always Boulder Dam. It just comes out naturally—Boulder Dam!

You see, they changed the name of that dam about 3 times. It was Boulder Dam originally, and then Ray Lyman Wilbur named it Hoover Dam, and then they got it changed back to Boulder Dam. Finally, they got Congress to pass the law that officially named it Hoover Dam. It will never be anything but Boulder Dam as far as I'm concerned.

It was said that Las Vegas would be the railhead for all of the material that was going in there. But Ray Lyman Wilbur, who was the president of Stanford University before he got in as Secretary of the Interior, was a very blue-nosed man. He was a straight-laced, stiff-necked New Englander. He didn't want his workers exposed to that sort of stuff. He came in here when they started to lay the rails from the Union Pacific line out to Boulder City. (They had a sideline out there that they'd switch off any of the stuff that went to Boulder City.) Wilbur came into town to drive the spike that started the Boulder Dam Project. We went about closing all the bootlegging places and all the houses of prostitution down on Block 16 so that he wouldn't see anything out of the way. When he came in, they took him around and showed him all the places in Las Vegas, which, at that time, wasn't very much of a show, because they had about a 6 square block as the original town site. But he had heard things about Las Vegas before he came-sin city.



He came in and made a speech at which he said it would be the Hoover Dam. He wanted to name Boulder City Hoover City, but he decided that that wasn't a good idea, because it was too closely tied to the Depression.

When Wilbur made his statement that Boulder City would be built to support the construction of the dam, the idea of moving Block 16 died. There were several sites where they had wanted to move it. The Westside was one of them, and 4 miles east of Las Vegas was another one. Nobody wanted Block 16, but there was never any great active movement to move it. Wilbur clogged those rails and it remained where it was. It was all right where it was as far as the citizens in the community were concerned. It remained there until Nellis, the air base, moved here.

*What was the town's response to the government's decision to build Boulder City?*

It was quite a blow, because all the merchants figured that they were in for a very prosperous 4 or 5 years, and it just wiped out their future.

When Boulder Dam was first started, there was an influx of people into Las Vegas that you wouldn't believe. We must've had 5,000 people here who were looking for work on the dam. They would set up camps in tents or cardboard boxes, things of that sort, waiting to possibly get work on the dam. It was during the Depression. It was a very few weeks after the dam was announced.

Along the highway from Las Vegas to Boulder City there were little groups of shacks. You couldn't describe it as housing; it was merely existing. Shacks were built from tin cans and old cartons and anything that could be picked up to keep the elements out of the "house." There were 2 areas out there—

Texas Acres and Oklahoma City—which were across the street from where the Railroad Pass Casino is now. It's just on the south side of the railroad. There was one camp between Las Vegas and North Las Vegas, just north of the cemetery; that was known as Hoover City.

The dam was the only real project that was going on under the Depression. People came out here and figured that they would get the jobs, and they just put together shacks or whatever would keep the elements out. The majority of the people in those shacks were men. Usually men would come out here to see if they could get a job. If they'd get a job, they'd send for their families. There was not much family life in those shacks.

They had tent cities in the Boulder City area and on the upper level down at the dam. They'd board the structure up to about 3 or 4 feet and then put the tent over that and live in the place on the ground. They would live there, eat there and sleep there on the ground.

There were some families that came in. They'd drifted in family by family. They were taken care of out there while they were building the dormitories.

I know the government had a police officer out there. They built the houses for the high brass first and then built the dormitories. It was about a year that people would live in these makeshift homes.

*How did the Las Vegas community handle these people?*

They had a woman by the name of Mrs. Fleming, who was the welfare agent for the county. The county supplied money to take care of these people who couldn't . . . . If they came in automobiles, they'd give them gasoline to get out of town. They'd sometimes give them food, but very little cash was distributed, because they were afraid that if

the cash was distributed it would be placed in the wrong hands. They'd go spend their money someplace where they shouldn't.

When I first came to Las Vegas, I came down with the first chief of police. Prior to that time, they had 2 constables—a daytime constable and a nighttime constable. We didn't have anything but a volunteer fire department. We had a police force that had 3 members on it before the dam started. But they never had any problems, because there wasn't too much crime then or too much disorder.

There was very little crime in Las Vegas, mainly because of the fact that if you committed a crime, there was no way to get out of here. Between here and Reno you had Beatty, and between here and Kingman you had Needles, and between here and Los Angeles you had the agricultural stations. You couldn't go out in the desert and escape, because if you did, you never came back. There was not a great amount of value . . . I mean gems and that sort of stuff. When they did commit a murder or anything, they were captured within a couple hours.

We did have a few stabbings . . . I mean not fatal. There was one murder out in Boulder City in 1937; a woman named Grace Nusser killed her husband. We did have one chain-link murder. A railroad man shot another railroad man, then went over in the Sal Sagev Bar and committed suicide. About 2 or 3 hours later they found the wife of the guy that committed suicide in the trunk of an automobile. Once they found the remains of a call boy out in the desert. That was sort of a love-nest affair. When the husband was out of town, the call boy would tell all the friends of this gal, and they'd sneak over and have a little session.

By the time that the dam started and the influx started, we had a police force of maybe 15 to 20 men. It was expanding all the time!

The accommodations for prisoners were very bad. They had a holding tank in the city jail, which was on Second Street in the vicinity of where Benny Binion's Horseshoe Club is now. They had one room that was 15 by 40 maybe—no facilities. It was called the blue room. It had no plumbing fixtures at all. It had a floor that slanted into a big cesspool, and they'd wash it out maybe every 2 or 3 days. Anybody who was incarcerated more than a day or 2 never wanted to see it again. It was compared by some of the people to the Black Hole of Calcutta. They'd just throw them in there and keep them overnight and then give them a floater the next day—get them out of town if you could.

I was very close to the city commission, and the city commissioners appointed the city judge. They decided that they needed an alternate judge to preside when Judge Frank McNamee was away. He used to make trips over to Europe and be away for a month or 2. So they appointed me as an alternate judge: I would serve when he was out of town. The police department was very happy that I was appointed as the judge. The hobo jungles were over in back of what now is the Union Plaza Hotel, and there used to be many, many vagrants who lived over there. When I was presiding on the bench, the police would go and round up the vagrants over there in the jungles and bring them in, arrest them, keep them overnight and bring them in to see me the next morning. So they were very familiar with their surroundings in the blue room. I would ask them whether they pleaded guilty or not guilty—no visible means of support. If they pleaded guilty, I would say, "All right now. I'll give you a suspended sentence of 10 days in the blue room. If you're out of town by sunrise, everything will be all right. I won't be able to do anything to you." If they pleaded not guilty, I wouldn't give them a chance to

get out of town. They'd have to spend their 10 days in the blue room. Every time that I was on the bench, the police officers would go out and round them up. For maybe 6 weeks, maybe 2 months, we wouldn't have any of the panhandlers and the beggars and those kinds of people on the street.

*Did you ever make distinctions between single males and people who were on the road with their families?*

Usually, the people who were on the road with their families went to the welfare department. If they had families and had someplace to go, I would send them over to the welfare department. Mrs. Fleming, who was the head of the welfare department here for the county, would give them enough money to get gas and food to get someplace else.

*So most of the people you saw were single men?*

Yes, right. We had an awful problem with the vagrants who came in here from other parts of the country and expected to get jobs right away. They couldn't get jobs right away. They had no money, and we had to get them out of here.

*Were there any other types of problems that you handled?*

Oh, drunks and disturbing the peace, that sort of stuff. Any time you would sentence them to the blue room, you were a cinch not to see them again for at least 5 years, because the stench in that place was just absolutely terrible! It was made to accommodate maybe 10 or 12 people. On some weekends they'd have as many as 150 in there, and they would

be from wall to wall, some of them sleeping on top of the others. It was very, very bad. As I say, the people of the community weren't accustomed to handling these sorts of things, and the only way to do it was to get them as far away out of town as possible! Let somebody else take care of them.

*I have run across an article that refers to chain gangs. It was suggested that perhaps vagrants should be put in chain gangs. Did that ever come to pass?*

It never came to pass, except that there was a place over on the Westside, just on Bonanza Road, that had a large area that they could work in. I can't think of the name that they had for it, but, anyway, they'd make things for the community like garbage cans, and things of that sort. And they would send them out to clean up the streets and sometimes paint the curbs. They worked all over town. They'd just make them work at something. They didn't chain them together.

*Was it a choice between going into the jail that you described or going over there to work?*

Yes. The judge would make that decision. My personal opinion is that I would rather go out on the 'chain gang,' because at least you had pure air outside. They just received the same kind of food that the jail prisoners would. We had to do something with all this influx of people that came in here, because, as I say, they were camped all over the valley. The people who behaved themselves, the county usually would take care of them. But when they got in trouble, they were given sentences that would not be very satisfying to the present . . . ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union].

*If there was a family in need that had lived here for some time, how would the community help them?*

There weren't many people who were out of work-local people. The railroad was still running, and there were construction jobs that were going on with the idea that they would be filled by the dam workers. If any of the Mormons were in trouble, they could go over to the bishop's place and get food. Other churches would provide food, clothing . . .

The Red Cross and Salvation Army were very active here. Florence was on the Red Cross board. I was familiar with the work that they did. They did very good work. They would supply clothes and meals—the usual things that the Red Cross did. The Salvation Army established a . . . I don't know what they call them, but there was a captain or someone who was the head of the organization, and they helped out. If you haven't lived through it, you can't imagine what would happen to a little railroad community of 5,000 people and having about a good 10,000 to 20,000 people dumped on it all at one time.

*It was more a matter of private than public effort?*

Oh, yes. It had to be, because there wasn't any money available! It was all dumped in their lap at one time. You had to provide schools for the kids. You had one high school and one grammar school. You had to provide facilities for the community. The water company couldn't supply water because their charter wouldn't allow them to provide any for any places outside of the original town site. Believe me, it was terrible! They just didn't know what to do. I mean nobody knew what to do, because they were here, and some of

them could get jobs on the dam, and some of them couldn't. When they dumped all these people on inside of a month the community grew from about 5,000 people to 10,000 people. You dumped them all in there; you had problems—people problems. We just did the best we could.

*Did crime increase?*

Yes, murder mostly. At one time they had 6 murder cases on the calendar. They had only one judge there.

*What about robberies, crimes against property?*

Not so much, but it did develop, because some of these people would get hungry, and they'd go break into some houses so they could get money, or steal stuff from a grocery store.

The merchants put money together and hired people to watch their stores at night. You see, there again, the community had no money to do these things, because they were putting out the money for the actual living qualities that they had in Las Vegas, and they didn't have enough money for a patrol at night. The merchants would confer very much with all the members of the city commission. I mean Las Vegas still was a small town, and everybody knew everybody else. Whenever the merchants wanted to complain, they'd go over to the city commission and complain, and the city commission would either grant it or tell them they couldn't do it. That was the reason the "merchant police" was formed, because the city just couldn't afford it.

*Considering this horde of newcomers, tell me how the power structure got along with the ordinary people in town who were firmly rooted here.*

Very well! I mean they were part of the people who were rooted here. They were local people that had grown up with the community, the majority of them. Some just happened to have more money or more juice or something . . . .

*How might an important member of the community have dealt with someone who had a bill that they couldn't pay? How would something like that have been handled?*

They were all part of the community, and you didn't have very many problems with the community that was here, because they knew the routine. But whenever you bring people into any community, you bring people problems with them—sanitary facilities, schools . . . . The people who were running the community and the county at the time were people who lived here, knew the situation, and were able to handle the situation or the problems of a small community.

*If you had a problem paying your water bill or meeting your loan, would you go to the individual and . . . ?*

We used to get water for \$2.50 a month—all the water that we needed. You'd have to take your bill—if you got a bill—down to Walter Bracken at the water district headquarters and pay it. If you didn't pay it, you just forgot about it or let it ride for a while. Walter Bracken would see me on the street, and if I hadn't paid my water bill for a couple of months, he'd tell me, "Johnny, look, I've got to have some money. And you better get down to the office and pay some money before I have to shut off your water." That was man to man.

If you went down to the bank to talk to Ed Clark, he'd say, "Well, all right, I've got to have some money on your note. Now, how

much can you pay?" If you could pay only \$5 a month, that was OK, as long as you were paying the money in. It was a typical small town.

When they were building the preliminary things out at Boulder City, the Six Companies opened up a general store. Six Companies were paying off in scrip. This became quite a problem for the people of the city of Las Vegas, because we were looking forward to the good business during the building of the dam. The fact that they had the store out there in Boulder City did a little damage to the city of Las Vegas.

Most of the top leaders in Las Vegas got ahold of their congressman and their senators in Washington and apprised them of the situation. I don't know whether a bill was passed in the Congress, or whether it was a gentleman's agreement, but an agreement was made between the Bureau of Reclamation and the citizens of Las Vegas. Six Companies would not be able to pay in scrip any more. Outside of that there wasn't too much effect of the Depression felt in Las Vegas. I would say that good far outstripped the bad.

As far as Six Companies were concerned, they were accepted as Las Vegans. Many of them that would belong to the Rotary Club and the Elks Club. Every weekend was an amalgamation of the dam workers and the local people. A great many people of Boulder City who were single used to come into Las Vegas on payday and rip up the town. There were a lot of the local girls who married engineers who were working out there. Scrip was the first and probably the only problem that I remember.

In Las Vegas, we had our own purely local scrip, too. At the *Review-Journal*, every week we would be paid half in cash and half in scrip, which we could take over to any advertiser and use it to buy stuff. They just didn't have



money enough to pay us off, and the people who were advertising were on small change. It was a barter situation for maybe a couple of years.

There were 3 projects that had to be done before they could even start on the dam: they had to build the railroad between Las Vegas and the dam; they had to build a road; then they had to set up some sort of municipal deal. So you had people coming in here who were railroad builders and road builders, besides the ones who came in to build the dam. The present day can thank Le Tourneau, who was a big machine builder, for the type of machine that was developed. Le Tourneau was working all the time. He was the one who was building the road out there.

They were drilling the diversion tunnels out there right through solid rock. They started one crew at one end and another crew at the other and one in the middle. Each one of them worked to bring the thing together. I think when they got them into the center where they should join, they were 6 inches apart—6 inches off.

At the time, the dam was the highest construction project that had ever been known in the world, I guess. And for the size of the project and the number of people who were working out there, there were very, very few deaths—the death rate out there was very small, considering.

There were several accidents out there. One was a monkey slide that they had when they got the dam about halfway up. They used to lift the workers up in an elevator. It was a wooden floor and had a fence around it and would lift them up to where they were to go to work. One day the lift broke and dumped these people down on a lot of iron rods that were vertical. I think there were about 6 or 8 of the people who were killed then. Another time after they got the diversion tunnels in

and the water was going through the diversion tunnels, there were 3 or 4 people who were working on a scaffolding inside the dam. It broke, and they rode the lumber down through the tunnel and on the river. Nobody was hurt.

Florence went out to the dam at least once a week and followed the construction period. If there were any accidents—any real big accidents or anything of that sort—she'd go out. She was the only woman who was allowed down in the canyon.

*How did she manage that?*

I don't know, to tell you the truth. It was a fetish of the construction stiffs down there that if a woman came around a construction area that bad luck would follow. But she knew all the foremen down there and a lot of the workers. She was just one of the gang.

*Among the gripes of the laborers were the working and living conditions. Boulder City hadn't been built before the project started . . .*

I don't think it was only the union people out there—those who leaned towards the unions—who were the only ones who would complain, because the working conditions out there were absolutely terrible! In the summertime down there the heat in the canyon was practically unlivable. It'd be 125, 130 degrees. The rocks down there in the canyon would get heated, and they'd never cool off. So the workers were in the heat all the time. Some professor from Yale or Harvard, one of those places, had discovered that if you took salt tablets, you would perspire more. The salt would help you do that. The Six Companies put in little racks that had salt tablets, and workers had to take salt tablets every time they took a drink of water. And, of

course, they had a hospital out there so that they could take care of the people. The houses out there that Six Companies built—about 5 or 6 of them where the executives lived—were all brick buildings. The other places were sort of thrown together so that they could get the people in there. At that time, that early time, there were no cooling systems anyplace.

Florence was sorry for the families because they had to live in the places that they did. She thought that Six Companies were doing the best they could, because at that time you have to remember that we didn't have all of the equipment that we've got now—electric refrigerators and stuff of that sort. Then you'd have to have an icebox. You had no cooling system at all. Out there they used to get on the lawn in front of the government building and sleep out there. The trees were planted but weren't giving any shade. It was rough going. The people who were out there were pioneers, believe me!

*Did you ever frequent the dam site?*

Oh, yes, I used to go down maybe once a month and talk to the people—to Frank Crowe and Walker Young and people at Babcock and Wilcox. I used to see Sims Ely, the city manager of Boulder City, maybe once a month. We would talk about what the prospects were for Boulder City and the dam. Ely was a very, very hard man. He was very hard to interview; he wouldn't talk very much. He sat up there on the throne. You couldn't get much out of him. Walker Young and Frank Crowe were the easiest people out there to interview. Young was the reclamation engineer. He represented the Reclamation Bureau. And Crowe was the Six Companies engineer.

Boulder City originally was a federal reservation. Sims Ely (he came from someplace

in the East, I think) was made a virtual czar. If you were caught drunk, you were brought up before him. If you could explain it to his satisfaction, he'd let you stay; if not, he'd kick you out. There was nothing that went on that he didn't handle.

They had a barrier out there; it was not a barrier, but it was sort of a police gate. They'd make everybody stop to be sure that they didn't have any liquor in their car. If they did, the liquor in the car was confiscated. You just didn't get in. If you were suspect, they'd just hold you to get before Ely, and Ely'd decide whether you could stay or not. He had tunnel vision. If you didn't believe the way he believed, you didn't live there. I was never there for any of his decisions, but I got the decisions later, and there was no reason that he did what he did. Some resident of Las Vegas'd go out there, and they might have forgotten to take that flask of whiskey out of their automobile. They'd find it and he'd be barred for life. Ely controlled the community. I've forgotten when Boulder City was given back to the county, but after they opened it up, it was an entirely different community.

Florence talked with Ely often and would get some decisions from him. She had an awful tough time getting anything out of him. She said the less she had to do with him the better she'd like it! [laughter] She wasn't impressed with him. She thought that he was the perfect kind of a guy to run Boulder City, because they had the regulations, and they were to be lived up to. Ely made them live up to them.

*Did Florence cover the labor troubles there?*

Well, the majority of the labor troubles were brought into Las Vegas from Boulder City. She'd go to some of the meetings just to find out what was going on. She thought the



same thing that everybody else did: that they had their place, and they should stick in it.

They made Bud Bodell U.S. Marshal out in Boulder City. Bud and I were pals. Bud came down here from Ely. He was a very good friend of Pros Goumond and A. B. Witcher, who opened the Boulder Club gambling establishment in the downtown area. It's part of Benny Binion's place now. Bud was a typical police officer. He served here in town before he was made U. S. Marshal.

Bud wasn't afraid of anything. He'd walk into a cage of wildcats and fight them. I remember one time this friend of his came up from California to visit him. This guy was staying in the Apache Hotel, and I got a telephone call from Bud telling me to come on over and join the party. When I went over there, these 2 guys were standing up just slugging each other for the fun of it. They'd just ripped out a door and broke up all the furniture. They were just having a real hell of a time! [laughter] That's how well I knew him.

Bud had a very high-powered automobile that he drove, and he was the paymaster for the dam. He came into Las Vegas and picked up the money from the bank to meet the payroll out there—I guess it was millions of dollars. He never had one bit of trouble. Nobody ever stopped him or anything.

*After he went to work in Boulder City, what kinds of problems did he have with workers?*

Oh, just the general problems—keeping them under control. He was a real tough guy.

There was a story that went around Boulder City. I think it is true, although I can't authenticate it. Red Belmain was a worker. Bud made an agreement with Red Belmain that they'd have a fist fight out in front of the mess hall, and the guy that lost the fist fight would have to leave town. Bud just beat the

dickens out of him. They didn't have the strike, but Belmain was trying to . . .

I don't know that Bud was sent there to keep labor under control, but he was sent there to keep the whole community under control. Everybody knew Bud Bodell and how tough he was, and they didn't want to tangle with him. He was perfectly satisfied with the way the people were living out there. He backed Ely's idea of living. He'd tell them . . . at the end he'd say, "You better obey it." He had all our deputies at the gate. He kept pretty good control.

Bud didn't go out to Boulder City until after they started building the dam itself. Bud lived out there. He stayed through the building of the dam; then he came back into Las Vegas and was the deputy sheriff for quite some time. Then he became a private investigator. He was a P1 down in Los Angeles, also.

*Were there any labor problems at the dam?*

There was no labor problem at all, because there were at least 100 men for one job. No shortage of labor. No way. And, of course, at that time, there were no labor unions, no labor organizations here at all. I think the only unions that were available at that time were the railroad unions. The unions lost their hold in Las Vegas when they had the strike in 1922. They practically moved all of the railroad shops out of Las Vegas.

*What was the labor policy of Six Companies? What kinds of workers were they looking for?*

All kinds. They were miners and muckers and machinists; it went the whole gamut because they were using that sort of stuff.

*I have read that the IWW picked Hoover Dam as a place to organize unskilled workers.*

That's probably true. Ragnald Fyhen came down here. He was a labor organizer in Reno. He was pretty straight union. He was just coming down to organize a union. I think he came down on his own with the expectation of being the labor boss here. But it was the Depression. The people who were working on the dam were feeding their wives and children and having a fairly good existence. They weren't interested in unions.

*I have also read about Frank Desmond Anderson, who was a Wobbly representative.*

Oh, yes. I remember him. I met him, but I don't recall anything that he did out of the ordinary. He was quite diligent in his attempts. We didn't pay any attention to the unions at that time.

*I also have read that the IWW distributed 2 newspapers in town during the building of the dam: Industrial Solidarity and Industrial Worker.*

They were printed out of town and shipped in. I think they distributed them only in Boulder City. I think I saw one; I think it was the first one you named. But we didn't pay any attention to them. They just didn't have any luck because of the Depression.

*Did you know the content of the IWW papers?*

Oh, yes. They were waving a red flag every day. Most of the people just didn't pay any attention to those. They were perfectly satisfied with the newspapers they had.

*Frank Anderson was ultimately arrested. The sheriff at the time was Eddie Johnson.*

Eddie Johnson. Yes, I knew Eddie Johnson. I think he was deputy sheriff. I don't recall the incident. I do know that they were arrested, and they were floated out of town.

*The Review-Journal criticized the Las Vegas Age for thinking that the Wobblies were a real threat. How did you regard the Wobblies?*

We just disregarded them.

*Why did the Age take them more seriously as a threat?*

Oh, I think it was just because we were on the other side. I think that was the early part of the battle between the newspapers here. One would take one side, and the other would take the other. Al didn't think that anything was going to happen, because everybody felt that Las Vegas was a town that was not going to be affected by any of these Wobblies or strikes or anything else, because of the Depression.

*There were two other IWW organizers who were arrested: C. E. Seizer and Louis Gracey.*

They are familiar to me, but I didn't know them. Any of those Wobblies who came up were floated out of town. We didn't even use their names, I don't think. As I say, the idea that people in Las Vegas had at that time was if any of the troublemakers are in here, get them out of town! They could stay in the blue room until they rotted.

*I have read that Anderson was ultimately cleared of these charges. Do you remember his lawyer, a man called T. Alonzo Wells?*

Oh, yes, T. A. Wells. There again, I don't think we even covered the trial. Wells wasn't one of the leading attorneys in Las Vegas.

*Does it surprise you that he would be defending a Wobbly?*

No, because he was the type of person who would. Wells defended any of the people that were in the lower classes. I think that there was a lot of behind-the-scenes maneuvering, that Anderson made a deal that if he was not held, that he'd get out of town.

*Do you know anything about the judge who cleared him—W. C. Morris?*

Yes, he was a city court judge. He was just an ordinary guy. I never knew of any instances where he waved the red flag at all. There was one case concerning lewdness that I can't tell you about that I thought he was a bum, but outside of that he was all right. Of course, in the lewdness case, it wasn't so much his doing as it was the attorney's doing . . . Horsey. Outside of that, Morris was a very fair guy. He'd do what he thought was best for the community.

*Tell me about the Las Vegas Central Labor Council.*

That was the one that Ragnald Fyhen organized. I knew Fyhen very well. I knew him in Reno. He was a labor organizer there . . . craft workers mostly. His Central Labor Council was supposed to represent all of the laborers in Las Vegas. I don't know that he got out onto the dam, because, you see, Sims Ely had the right to bar anybody from the dam reservation, and I think Fyhen was barred from the reservation.

Fyhen came down here with big ideas. I talked to him just shortly after he came down here, and having known him in Reno, he opened up pretty good to me. He said he was down here to organize the labor force, and that he was going to get the workers on Boulder Dam organized, and he was going to be the boss. He had big ideas, and they just didn't work. He was kind of on the outer fringe of the inner guard of the labor unions in Reno. Reno, of course, was a lot older than Las Vegas and had existed on a lot of the labor problems. But the people in the city of Las Vegas were determined that the labor unions were not going to get a big hold on the community.

*Who was in the Central Labor Council, and what did they do?*

Oh, it was the carpenters and the electricians and those people who were hired by the contractors who were building houses and other things in Las Vegas. They were not very successful—not at that time. They became stronger later.

*Did you oppose his efforts?*

Well, we didn't give him much space. The thing that we felt at that time, and I'm sure that my brother joined with me, is that any of these people who were trying to do anything that would give Las Vegas a bad name, they would not be covered. I mean—I just let them go. We had editorials in the paper that warned against any advance of the Wobblies. Later, labor became a pretty big part of the political picture.

Fyhen used to come into the office all the time. He'd go in and talk to Al, and I'd be out working. I know that Al didn't care too much for Fyhen. He was going to do something

that was going to cripple the community by calling a strike.

*Did they ever make any demands that could lead to a strike?*

Not that I remember. I think they did call a strike up at Boulder Dam. I think that it lasted about 3 days. That I am not at all familiar with, because I didn't cover it. I'm sure Florence did.

You see, Las Vegas was just getting over the railroad strike and the effects of the railroad strike, and the people who were here were just absolutely fighting mad about the rail strikes, because the Union Pacific moved all of the employment out of the city of Las Vegas.

*The IWW was supported by the Central Labor Council. Do you remember that?*

Yes, I think it was. It was a sort of a merger between the 2 of them, and if they could have merged that they would get some action. But there was no great support for them.

*There was a strike at the dam in 1931.*

Yes. They were told that they'd either work or get off the reservation. Six Companies finally backed off and didn't cut the wages.

*How did the City of Las Vegas respond to that strike?*

It disturbed them a little, stirred up a lot of problems. The Chamber of Commerce naturally was against it, because it was going to affect the future of the city of Las Vegas. The national press was all in this depression. When the people out here struck, there was a slight movement of people from the rest of the

country to come in here and take the strikers' place. The paper was with Six Companies and made the statement that I just gave you: there are other people that will come in here and take your place.

*The Review-Journal reported that certain businesses contributed supplies to the striking workers and showed them sympathy. Do you recall that?*

I think there were a couple of them that did . . . not in the inner circle. I'm not sure who they were. I know there were some. But, I don't want to put a tag of . . . because some of them are still around.

*What was the reaction of other merchants in town to this activity?*

Oh, they didn't pay much attention to it.

*How did they respond to the merchants who helped the strikers?*

They were sort of blacklisted. Well, it wasn't exactly a blacklisting. They didn't come out with ads. Customers would come in to the regular establishments, and the clerks would be able to tell them, "Well, you know who's supplying the labor unions with their supplies."

*Do you think the Chamber of Commerce might have encouraged this kind of activity?*

Well, I think that the Chamber of Commerce was one of the major "generals in the army," so to speak.

*How did that strike end?*

I think they just came to an agreement that they weren't going to pay them any more

money, and they just went back to work. That depression was a big club that they could hold over an organized labor group.

*Another strike was called in 1933. Do you recall that strike?*

I think that only lasted a day or so. It didn't have any real effect on the community.

I think that was about the time Bill Busick came in here; I'm not sure. I am fairly certain that he was here, but I wouldn't swear to it. I think he maybe came from California. I think he was working for the Review-Journal at the time; I think he was our advertising salesman. You could tell by his conversation that he was leaning towards communism . . . well, the tenets of Lenin, Stalin (I guess Stalin wasn't around then) and the theory that they had—that communism would be a much better form of government than democracy. He wanted to bring communism, because democracy wasn't working. He didn't get very far. As far as the state was concerned, he never made any impact whatever. Like most of the rest of the communists, he said that it'd work better than democracy, but he couldn't tell you why.

There were a lot of people who believed what Busick was talking about. He swore that he was holding communistic meetings at his home. Maybe once a week or once every 2 weeks, you'd see a bunch of sort of odd people going into his house. I mean they weren't of the political faith of either the Republicans or Democrats.

*Were some of the merchants who supported the strikers his friends?*

Yes, they were; there were 2 or 3 of them who were . . . oh, not in the frontline leadership, but they were in the picture.

I never paid too much attention to Busick. I let him go his way, and I went mine. The only thing that we were interested in is how many local people he was attracting. That's why we kept track of him. No names. I guess they felt the same way he did. There was one guy, specifically, who was always complaining about the operation of the city commission and the operation of the state and so forth. And there were a great many railroad people . . . of course, they were losing their power at that time because the city was growing and they were out of power. And some of those people that'd come in here who were attracted by the building of the dam—new people. It's like these investigative reporters of today: they just found fault with everything . . . just general complaint. They hadn't assimilated the spirit of the city of Las Vegas. I think they were more or less disgruntled merchants—the businessmen who were in with Busick. I think they were disgruntled merchants because they couldn't make a living here. Las Vegas was still kind of a closed corporation. I think that it was because they didn't desire to belong, because the Chamber of Commerce was wide open. I mean anybody could join the Chamber of Commerce who was in business.

*Did you ever talk to Busick about the conversations he was having with those groups?*

No. No, as I say, I never paid any attention to him. He was in the advertising department; I was in the news department.

*Did your brother ever discuss problems with him?*

I think so, yes. My brother was a very questioning person, and he wanted to know what made Bill Busick work. So he got into



a lot of stuff and learned a lot of stuff about Bill's ideas. These he kept to himself; he never discussed it with me. [chuckling] I thought Bill Busick was an S.O.B., and I still think so. He was a sociable sort of a guy, but I was never attracted to him.

*I understand that blacks were not hired in the early stages of building the dam. Do you recall anything about that situation?*

I don't remember any big issue being made of whether blacks were to be hired.

*Did you notice that large numbers of blacks came in looking for work during the dam construction?*

Yes. There was a change in the black population, and that was when the Westside became their area.

*Did you, as acting municipal judge, ever deal with black vagrants? Did you notice an increase in black vagrancy at this time?*

Not too much. They were here. They did come, and . . .

*Do you know where they came from? Were they southern blacks, or . . .?*

Mostly, yes. I would say that some of them came out of Los Angeles, and some of them came out of Chicago and those areas, but they were from all over the country. I mean the population of Las Vegas at that time was very varied. All types of people came here. We had stockbrokers who had commanded millions of dollars working as muckers out there. They brought some culture to the community also.

*I do get the impression that things changed for blacks in Las Vegas in the mid-1930s, partly as a result of the upheaval from the dam. Did you notice changes?*

That was when the Westside developed. That's where blacks went, mainly because they couldn't afford to go anyplace else. They weren't being forced out of downtown. It was the prices and property values. They just weren't in that bracket.

There were the old-timers over there who resented the fact that blacks were moving in, but there wasn't anything that anybody could do about it. I remember that they did have a clash over there—mostly a legal clash. I think the city council favored letting them live over there. I don't think the Chamber of Commerce took any direct action, but they didn't fight it. The newspaper didn't fight it . . . didn't pay too much attention to it. They had to go somewhere, and the Westside was an undeveloped area. They didn't have any paved streets, didn't have any sidewalks. It was much cheaper, and the places that were over there were not well-built. The mayor, along about that time, said that they couldn't pave the streets, because there was not enough assessed valuation there to pay for it. That was before the federal funds became available. It was known as the Westside, and there was a drive on a part of the lot of the people on this side to change the name of the Westside to something else, because they felt that the Westside was the blot on the history books. The majority of the Negroes had . . . didn't have to, but, I guess, they did live on the Westside.

*I found a man called Arthur McCants . . .*

Yes, I remember Art McCants. He was just a black barber who was employed . . . I



don't know whether he was with Art Harris or Bill Glore, but he was accepted. McCants served them all; he was integrated, yes. I'm pretty sure he had grown up in Las Vegas. I know that he was here when I first came down.

McCants was sort of the stirrer-upper. He was for the blacks; he was a speaker for them. He would try to get the El Portal Theater to remove the segregated seating system they had over there. McCants was the guy who went to Ernie Cragin and asked not to have a segregated area in the theater . . . because it was one of the little sores that was on the big, fat hog. I think that McCants had support of most of the preachers over on the Westside, because the ministers have been very active ever since the Westside. Of course, the thing that we were more concerned with was the taking care of the tremendous influx of people in here, than to worry about a certain segregated area. It was not a great issue. There wasn't any great drive, because, at that time, the blacks were a very minor portion . . . . There wasn't too much of a black rebellion or anything.

*Do you know anything about McCant's petition concerning segregation?*

No, I don't remember.

*I understand that the city resisted his efforts . . .*

They probably did, because the city commission at that time was comprised of the old-timers of Las Vegas. They thought that the blacks had a place that they should stay, and the whites should have a place they'd stay.

There was a little guy by the name of Shorty Hodges who shined shoes at Art Harris's barber shop, and he used to be the

most vociferous guy at the weekly prizefights that they had. Everybody knew him and respected him, and that was the way they were. They were accepted. When they built the new high school over there, they sent these black kids to high school, and they played on the football team, although there was a very definite segregation rule that was held by the casinos on the Strip. The Hoggards were in here, and they became very good citizens. There were a lot of people over there who, as the town grew up, got leadership within their own community.

As the dam was being constructed, the idea of the future was being erected also. As the dam went up, spirits went up. People were very enthused about what the dam would bring to the city of Las Vegas. They weren't especially concerned about the water that would be formed behind the dam.

*There must have been quite a housing shortage during the Depression.*

There was, very definitely. It was very interesting that when we would get a building boom, the building boom would come and then just stop and then would start in again. There were a lot of office sites.

Most of the people who worked in Boulder City lived in Boulder City. The government built them houses out there. People couldn't buy the houses. They had to lease them, because they were on government property. The government couldn't sell the houses or the land.

Las Vegas started in to expand during that era. We had 4 or 5 additions to the community—subdivisions. One of the biggest things that happened was that most of the real estate people who came in here—and they

came in here by droves from all over—would set up maps of these subdivisions that they were putting in and sell lots, but there was no way of getting water to them, no way of getting sewage. It wasn't good speculation, either. We tried to drive them out of town. There isn't any doubt about it. They sold lots and acreage up on Sunrise Mountain, and at that time there was no way of getting water there. The city didn't have a planning commission at that time, and any subdivisions that wanted to annex to the city of Las Vegas, they'd go in and have the annexation passed by the city commission. The city commission would not put in the provisions that they should provide water and sewage for them.

When the Basic Magnesium plant came in here and needed water, the government built a line from Lake Mead to Henderson. [The Basic Magnesium plant was authorized by the federal government in 1941.—ed.] It went right behind where they are building now. Some of the most beautiful homes in town are up there on Sunrise Mountain, but it took quite a while—about 45 years.

There was one group: Harmon, Ferron, Mildren and Martin—H.F.M. and M. They were local people who had bought up a lot of the ground outside of the original town site, after the dam bill was passed. They, of course, were among the leaders of the community, and they'd get the information.

*Were they reputable land dealers?*

Oh, yes. They just sold the land. They would not go into any subdivision, but they would sell the land to subdividers.

Local people and outsiders and whoever would come in and see the possibilities here would invest. To show you how the land values grew, I found out the other day that the corner lot where the Fremont stands was

originally purchased for \$1,250. The original buyers sold it for \$400,000. I don't know how much Del Webb paid for it—probably in the millions of dollars. There was another purchase that I knew about: a piece of land on Charleston Boulevard—3 acres bought for \$900. Some of it sold for as large as 6 figures.

*Was there any noticeable change in dirt and debris in the downtown area? Did that area deteriorate?*

It was dirty. Newspapers were blowing around. Everybody caused the problem. Florence always used to say, "Las Vegas looks all right when the sun's shining, but when it rains it looks awful." It really does. You go down to the Charleston underpass . . . They have a fence up there, and that fence is just clogged with old newspapers and garbage and everything else. I understand that they have a committee now which is interested in cleaning up the community. I am quite interested to how they work out.

*How well did the town government deal with these problems during the Depression? Was the town up to handling the problems of growth?*

No, they just sort of swept it under the carpet and hoped it would go away. The city commission and the county commission had people on them who had had no experience outside of the city of Las Vegas. They weren't accustomed to looking forward to see what had to be done, because before the dam was built, it was a small community, and they did just about as they pleased. In the late 1940s or early 1950s, Las Vegas decided they should put in a city manager.

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## THE *REVIEW-JOURNAL* IN THE 1940S

Florence Lee Jones and I were married in 1940. I got a divorce from my first wife about 1936, '37. It was about 4 years before I married Florence.

When we decided we'd get married, it was more or less an unwritten rule that no family members could work together at the *Review-Journal*. We had been in the process over the period of years that we worked together of tracing down marriages. We picked out the most unlikely spot that people would seek information about marriages. We were married in Kanab, Utah.

We kept our marriage a secret for a year. Florence was living with my mother in an apartment over on North Ninth Street, next to the hospital. Of course, I'd have to go over and see my mother. Sometimes I'd spend the weekend over there; other times I wouldn't. We managed to keep it a secret for a year.

*That must have been quite a job in a small town!*

Well, it was! [chuckles] But we were newspaper reporters; we knew where the blind spots were as far as news was concerned, and Kanab was one of them. The county clerk up there was a member of the Mormon church, and he was able to conduct marriages, so we got married there. My mother was in Virgin, Utah at the time, and she went, too. We went to the Grand Canyon for our honeymoon trip. Mother went to the services and went to the Grand Canyon. Herb was there and Mr. and Mrs. Jones, so it was sort of a family secret.

When we came back, Al says, "Well, I guess you fixed it up."

I said, "Yeah, didn't I." And that's all that was said. The Garsides thought it was a real good deal; they liked Florence very much. Nobody heard anything about it for a year until we announced it.

Florence and I went on vacation. I used to go up to Virgin, Utah, where Mr. Jones had some oil fields. He wasn't pumping a great deal, but he was pumping oil up there. I used

to go up there every summer and spend a 2 or 3 weeks vacation, because it was much cooler than it was down here. So we took our vacation back at Kanab. We put a little notice in the paper that Florence Lee Jones and John F. Cahlan had been married in Kanab, 1940. The police department in Las Vegas read the thing, and they called the agricultural station up there near St. George that stopped all the automobiles. They stopped us, and they said, "Pull over there at the side of the road until I let you go. I've got some information on you that we don't like." I knew what was happening, because I knew the people down at the police station. I knew that this is exactly what they'd do.

But Florence was quite perturbed until the guy came over and said, "It's all right. You can go now. The Las Vegas police department doesn't want you any more," or something. [chuckles] We had quite a little time at the border.

*When it became known that you were married, was your position at the newspaper in jeopardy?*

It didn't make any difference then. I think one of the reasons was because in 1940 there were war clouds gathering, and there was a lot of stuff going on in Las Vegas. The air base was being built, and it was just impossible for one person to cover the news. I married into the news source. We were indispensable. As I say, Florence and I formed more or less of a team; we thought alike on different subjects. Whenever there'd be any controversy, we'd sit down and talk it out and reach a peak and let it go at that.

I remember one story: there was a gal who was a British war bride; her name was Bridget Waters. She and her son came over from England. Her husband was working at a bank here and had deserted her, practically.

She shot him with the little handgun that Bud Bodell had given her for her own protection. It went in between the ribs and into the heart . . . killed him. It was a pistol shot. It had to be in the direct place of the heart, because if it had hit a rib, it would have deflected the bullet, and he would still be alive. It was murder.

I was with the police officers when they went down and arrested her. She had this small kid—I guess he was a year old or so. And I thought, "Oh, here's a real sob story that we could work out." I got Bud Bodell, who was a private investigator here for many years and was also in the sheriff's office for quite some time. I knew him very well. I talked to Bud about it, and we decided that we would get Jerry Geisler, who was the top defense attorney in Los Angeles (Bud was well-acquainted in Los Angeles)—we'd get him up here to conduct the trial. I laid the groundwork out for what we would do to get a sob story about Bridget Waters. I sent Florence over to the county jail to interview her. I guess she spent an hour, an hour and a half over there, and she came back and said, "I can't write the story."

I said, "Why not?"

She says, "She's just so guilty that there is no way that I could write a story that would even tend to turn a prospective juror toward her place."

The local attorney who was handling her divorce wouldn't let Geisler handle the case. He wanted to be the top dog in the case, so that fell apart. Florence and I sat down and talked about it, and I tried to convince her that here was the chance for her to be a Nellie Bly, who was, I guess you'd call her, an investigative reporter for the New York News. Florence convinced me that I was entirely wrong because we'd built this thing up. Bridget would get convicted and we'd be holding the stick.

Later I heard that Bridget Waters went before the parole board, and they turned down her parole. She went back to prison and said, "The first thing I'm going to do when I get out of prison is go down and kill that John Cahlan in Las Vegas." So that story fell through. That was the type of things that Florence and I would talk over.

Florence started to write a social column called "Beau Peeping." The first story she wrote was one where there were 2 people, a man and a woman who were together at a dance. The man's wife didn't know anything about it. The wife was jealous of her husband because he was running around with this young lady. He was a big advertiser in the newspaper, so when the wife of the husband who was running around came in and started in squawking and threatening to pull out his advertising, that was the last of Florence's column. Florence wouldn't write a social column until after the war.

In the 1940s we were still looking for people who could help us put out the newspaper because of the war. As far as that newspaper was concerned, it was a 2-person operation up until the forties. Florence and I were the only editors or reporters who were on the operation. None of the rest of them had had any of that kind of experience; it was up to us to produce the newspaper.

The 1940s were a time when help was very hard to get, and the community was expanding so rapidly that we had to try to keep up with it. I was out mostly recruiting people to go to work for the paper and expand the area that we covered. It was my responsibility to get the newspaper out daily, on time. Whatever it took, I tried to get. Our office down there at the *Review-Journal* was like a swinging door. We'd have reporters coming in the front door and reporters going out the back, because good help was very hard

to find. It was a little rough trying to keep that newspaper going as far as the development was concerned, because your help was so scarce, and most of it was bad.

I got out of the reporting business about in the 1950s, I guess, and took over the management of the newsroom. I was more interested in getting people to work, putting together a staff so that we could make the changes that would be good for the newspaper. So I didn't get around. I got out of the main stream about then.

It was before the war or during the early years of the war that Bill Busick came, because I remember that just about the time that he came here there was a gal who came in to work for me. She had some foreign name. It sounded like a Russian name. The girl's name was Sousev, but I've forgotten her first name. She was one of these gals that was just as red as red paint. In those days, we were so desperate for reporters . . . There were 2 other kids who came to work for me who had the same ideas that Busick did, and I canned all 3 of them—Sousev and the 2 kids—because I felt that they were sent in here from the outside and wanted to take over. I had evidence of it from the gal and at least one of the other men. They were just on the communist line.

*Did they belong to any organizations that you know of?*

Not here.

*Do you know whether they belonged to any organizations elsewhere?*

They certainly sounded like they belonged to the Communist party to me, and that's why I fired them. They generated a strike at the *Review-Journal*. It was during the war. Sousev was around . . . Busick and she and this

other man . . . Walt was his first name. They fomented a strike . . . or they tried to set up a union in the newsroom.

*You told me that in the early days of the paper your brother handled all the editorial writing.*

Right, through the 1930s. I took over the editorial page in the 1940s, because Al was too involved in the management of the entire operation. It was in the early forties; it was before the war. It was more or less of a managing editor affair, as far as I was concerned.

*What kinds of editorials did you write?*

Oh, everything that had anything to do with building Las Vegas or comments on the war—you know, the usual . . . I had a sports column that was “Punts, Pokes and Putouts” that I ran for about 25 years. Very seldom would I not write an editorial, unless it was a very ticklish subject that the newspaper was going to have to take a stand one way or another. Al would write the policy editorials, that’s called.

*Can you give me an example of something Al would handle?*

Oh, on a political basis of whether a governor’s decision was right or wrong, or something of that sort that concerned more or less the national standing of the state of Nevada.

My responsibility was the day-to-day, routine editorial commenting on things that happened in the community or in the state or nationally. I wrote editorials about the establishment of the air base here, and the things of that type I would handle. I wrote most of the editorials during the war. But

things that were out of my district, let’s say, Al would handle. He didn’t pay much attention to the editorials that I was writing, because he knew that anything of any great import that was going to reflect on the newspaper’s stand would be his responsibility and not mine. We’d get together and discuss it and just come to some decision of whether he was to write it or I. It was more or less of a cooperative deal.

*Did your brother continue to write his own column?*

Yes. “From Where I Sit.” It was read by a majority of the people who took the newspaper. He had quite an influence. Al would tell me, “Never mind writing an editorial on this, because I’ve already covered it in my column.” Or he would say, “I’m not going to cover this in my column. You go ahead and write an editorial.” I don’t want anybody to feel that he was putting the finger on me or I was putting the finger on him. It was something that was for the betterment of the newspaper that this happened. He knew more about it than I did. After all, he was one of the publishers.

*Did your situation change in other ways? Did you serve in any major organizations?*

Yes, I was a member of the board of directors of the Chamber of Commerce and Exalted Ruler of the Elks Lodge and president of the Junior Chamber of Commerce. I was always a member of the Chamber of Commerce because of my newspaper connections. Florence was a member of the Chamber of Commerce, and Al was a member, so that we were pretty well covered. I was also very involved in the development of Nellis Air Force Base.



The entire media operation in Las Vegas in the 1930s and up through the 1940s, was confined to the *Review-Journal*. I was correspondent for the United Press; Florence was for the Associated Press, *Salt Lake Tribune*, the *Christian Science Monitor* and 2 or 3 other papers she was free-lancing for. Anything that was favorable to Las Vegas we sent out over the wire; anything that was unfavorable we kept it right in the newspaper office. There would be somebody who would go out to the Desert Inn and make about 150 passes on the crap table and win a lot of money. That would go out over the wire. That was favorable, sure, because 3 or 4 people'd say, "Well, maybe I can go out there and do the same thing." We'd send out pictures . . . J. Walter Thompson and later Steve Hannigan, who handled the publicity for this area for about 3 years did that. We would send out stories of snow on Mount Charleston. You could ski in the morning at Mount Charleston and go down in the afternoon and water-ski on the lake . . . and all the fishing, all the sports stuff that was here.

*How about the negative stories that you tried to keep from going out?*

Well, no labor or racial violence or any great amount of crime or murders or anything of that sort ever went out. Maybe we weren't doing the news justice, but it was for the benefit of the city of Las Vegas. That was the basis of our operation.

*In the 1944 riot on the Westside, I believe that the Review-Journal blamed the Harlem Club for selling liquor.*

I remember an event or an occasion where the Harlem Club was mentioned. I wouldn't call it a riot; I'd call it more or less a

general fight between the blacks themselves. I don't think that there were any whites who were involved in that event. I didn't cover it myself, because at that time we had maybe 7 or 8 reporters who were sent out on different things.

*Is this the kind of thing that you would try to soft-pedal in the paper, for the sake of larger community concern?*

Yes, it was not played up. At that time we didn't have any TV stations in Las Vegas. You wouldn't go home in the evening and turn on your television set and see all these people milling around being given the publicity that they desired. We weren't especially interested in sensational journalism. We wanted to do a job on the newspaper where the people who subscribed to it were informed as to what was going on at the time and where. This we tried to use as our rule of thumb.

Anything that was out of the ordinary that might cause a riot or something of that sort, we soft-pedaled, not because of any feeling of attracting tourists, but for the community in general. We felt that the less of that stuff that went on, the better the people of the community would be. As I say, we didn't have any investigative reporters. The investigative reporter sat in the editor's chair. This is entirely impossible now, because you have so many TV stations, radio stations; you've got 2 newspapers. You cannot do what we did when we were the only newspaper in town, or the only media in town. Now some people will say that that is not good for the community, and yet I think that we contributed to the growth of the community to what it is now.

*In your situation, do you think having one major source of information was in fact a plus for Las Vegas?*

Very definitely. We may be charged with managing the news. There isn't any doubt about it. I'll admit it from day one, but it was an overall thing that we felt that this was better for the community than another race riot or something of that sort.

Just before World War II, when Florence and I were in Washington, Eva Adams, Senator McCarran's executive assistant, took us out to dinner a couple of times. She saw that we saw everything we wanted to in Washington. I could go in and ask her for favors. It was just before the war, I think. I was very deeply involved and I was sinking deeper and deeper into depression. I wrote to Eva and asked her to see what she could do about getting me a civil service job in Washington. She wrote me back and gave me all the necessary forms that I was supposed to fill out, and she said, "I think you're a darned fool to even think of living in Washington when you've got such a position as you've got in Las Vegas."

*What was your source of unhappiness at that time?*

It was just a general thing of too much work and too little money.

*How did you resolve that crisis?*

I just lived through it. Florence kicked me in the pants a couple of times and took the same stand that Eva Adams did, so I snapped out of it.

*Did you ever speak with your brother about your unhappiness?*

No, [laughter] he was the reason for my unhappiness. At the time I was not making nearly what other editors on similar papers were making. Every time I'd talk about a raise,

"Well, I'll have to see Mr. Garside." Whether he saw Mr. Garside, I don't know . . . I got disgusted with the whole deal.

*Do you think Al had the power to give you the raise himself?*

Sure.

*Why do you think he resisted that?*

I think it was just lack of money.

*Do you think Mr. Garside would have gone along had your brother approached him?*

That's doubtful.

*Did this unhappiness cause any problems at the paper?*

Florence was the only one who knew about it outside of myself. I wrote my brother a letter and never sent it to him. I did confront him directly about both Florence and me.

*What was his response?*

"Well, I'll look into it." The newspaper wasn't making a tremendous amount of money. We were expanding in circulation and in advertising, but we weren't expanding in the raises or more money for the employees. I didn't think it was fair, so I wrote this letter and let Florence read it. She said, "Don't send it." So that's somewhere in my files; I've got the original letter. It wasn't anything except economics. I don't think he had any inkling of the extent of my unhappiness. I tried never to show it.

*Did he know that you had looked into a civil service job?*

No. One thing that he did do was get me in to see the managing editor of the *Los Angeles Examiner* and apply for a job on the sports desk down there. I got down to Los Angeles and talked to this man and showed him my background. He was very impressed with the background, but he said, "You don't want to come to Los Angeles and work for William Hearst." He said, "You'd have Marion Davies following you up and down stairs." And he said, "You can do better where you are." Al had approached me on this. He said that this guy was looking for somebody for the sports desk, and he suggested that I go talk to him.

*Were there any other times while you were working on the Review-Journal that you had these feelings of frustration?*

Molly Malone was writing a book—*Industrial Nevada*, I think it was. It was the forerunner of the Southern Nevada Industrial Foundation. Malone was trying to do the same thing with his book that the Southern Nevada Industrial Foundation did with their work, attracting industry in here and telling them what we had. Molly wanted me to go with him and help him write the book. If the book was a success, he'd pay me X number of dollars. I didn't take that job either, and I'm very fortunate that I didn't take either one of them, because I feel that I did more for southern Nevada where I was than I could have done in either Washington or Los Angeles.

*Do you think your brother appreciated your contributions?*

No. He thought it was just routine that I was building the newspaper. I don't think that either Mr. Garside or Al ever appreciated what

I did. I built that thing from a one-typewriter newsroom to about 15 or 20.

*Do you think your brother appreciated Florence?*

Not her work—her contribution to the city of Las Vegas, no. They were too busy doing other things, I think, and they knew that they didn't have to worry about the news department.

I studied the various newspapers all over the West Coast. The United Press used to have a little pamphlet that they put out every month giving a picture of the front pages of newspapers all over the West Coast. I tried back and forth until I came to one that I liked. I adopted that as the model. I devoted a great deal of time down there. I was working anywhere from 14 to 18 hours a day when I first came down, because I was the only reporter, and we had to fill those pages. I thought that I ought to be earning more money than I was. It was a very little stipend that I was earning and not commensurate with a lot of the newspaper reporters in Reno or Barstow—small-town newspapers. I don't resent anything that I did at the newspaper. I don't resent Garside or my brother not appreciating what work I did, other people did, so that was all that was necessary. I am very, very happy that I made the decisions that I did. I think I contributed more in Las Vegas and southern Nevada than I could have contributed anywhere else. I was not only editing the Review-Journal, but I was forming the Junior Chamber of Commerce; I was going through the chairs at the Elks Lodge and trying to get a minor-league baseball team in Las Vegas, which I did.

*Do you think your brother appreciated those efforts?*

No. When I was down here then, Al was immersed in politics, and anybody that wasn't in politics just wasn't making it. The Board of Regents was the only political position that I ever sought. I was not a political figure. I think I reflected the feeling of the people of the state of Nevada. As far as I was concerned, political parties didn't mean anything. Nevada was small enough so that I knew practically all the leaders in the various counties of the state. If they had integrity and were truthful and would do the work to the best of their ability, that was the guy who I was interested in.

*How did your brother feel about you running for the Board of Regents?*

Oh, he was all for it. After that I had seen enough of politics. I didn't want to run for anything else.

*Did your brother ever approach you? With his backing, you might have had a political career. Did you ever consider that, or did he?*

He was afraid of losing me at the newspaper. I'm absolutely certain of that. One of the things that he and Mr. Garside said was that I was to be the editor for however long they were there. I don't want the readers to think that I am chomping away at the reputation of my brother. I am just speaking as it happened and as I saw. It was a matter of frustration. It wasn't anything that drove a wedge between my brother and me. I told him when I first came down here that I wasn't expecting to be given special favors because I was a member of the family. If I couldn't do my job, can me.

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## WORLD WAR II DEVELOPMENTS: NELLIS AIR FORCE BASE AND BASIC MAGNESIUM, INCORPORATED

It was in 1939 or 1940 that Bob Griffith saw an airman in the Apache Hotel lunchroom. Uniforms were not very numerous in the community at that time, and he got to talking to the sergeant who was there about what he was doing. He said, "Well, my major and I are surveying the western area for a gunnery range.' That's the first that we heard of it. We knew that there was a gunnery range going to be put in, but we thought it was going to be in Florida, out over the ocean.

Bob went out to the airport, which then was being operated by Western Air. This is where the Nellis Air Force Base is now. Bob contacted Major Dissoway, who later became chief of staff of the armed forces. He talked to Dissoway and found out what he wanted. Bob told him that we had all of this federal land out here that nobody was using, and it certainly was available to the air force for a gunnery range. Dissoway went back to Washington and recommended that this be selected as the spot for the gunnery school.

It was just about that time in the history of the city that we had the big battle between

the 2 forces in the city commission. We had a city election here. This Busick put up Johnny Russell. That was the time that this communistic stuff was floating around.

*How did Russell manage to win the election without the support of your brother and the paper?*

That is another strange story that nobody seems to know. It was the surprise of the century, because Ernie Cragin [who ran against Russell] was one of the men in the power structure, and he was well respected in the community.

*I understood that there was a 3-way split in the Russell election, that Cragin, Russell and someone else ran.*

I think it was Jim Down. I think that's when he ran for mayor.

Johnny Russell was elected mayor, [and his administration pretty near cost us Nellis Air Force Base.] When he was elected mayor

he took the stand that he could veto any plan that the city commission presented and voted on. He served about 2 years, I guess, and the first year was one of the most hectic years that we had—about 1940. Busick was right in the center of this.

It was a battle between the mayor and the commission. Johnny Russell was trying to shut the city commission out. It lasted for so long a time and 'was so vicious that the city commission resigned . . . en masse. Well, not en masse; there was one guy who stayed on. There is a long story that goes into that resignation. The leaders of the community got labor to nominate one guy and educate another, and I've forgotten who the other people were. These people were appointed to the city commission. After they were appointed, the original city commission withdrew their resignations. And for at least 8 months, maybe a year, we had 2 city commissions sitting at the same time- one on one side of the one-room city hall and one on the other side and the sheriff in the middle. I didn't like it at all, because I didn't think the commissioners who were appointed and ran for office in the next election were capable of doing city business the way it should be done. That's not to be critical, but they didn't have the know-how. They were mostly the people who were set in there. Johnny Russell recommended . . . or he asked the Chamber of Commerce and the labor unions, 2 or 3 other outfits, to recommend to him for appointment onto the commission. So they did. I think that Perry, the manager of the J. C. Penney Company here, was one of the people who was elected, and he was probably the smartest guy on both city commissions.

*You also mentioned that they appointed a representative of labor.*

Yes, I think it was Bill Gore. He was a barber in the community. As I say, I don't want to criticize the people who were here at that time. They just didn't have the experience. They were. . .well, a barber and a plasterer, and I've forgotten what the other people were, but they were partisans, and had no idea of how a community operated.

*They didn't have any ties to the people in power . . . ?*

Well, a couple of them did, but not real close.

*The city commission that had resigned wanted their places back after he'd made these appointments?*

They reneged on their resignations.

*Why do you think they did that?*

They saw that the new commission was bowing to Russell. The original commission hoped that the community would ask for Russell's ouster, because he was the sort of a man who had no practical political interests, but it didn't work. It had to go through the district court, and it was finally decided in favor of the original commission. It was at a very critical time in the development of the community, because we were dealing with the air force to get the air base out there where it is now. The contracts were all signed by both commissions to be absolutely certain that they would be legal and not subject to court action, whichever way the courts decided. It was a real battle! We had both city commissions sign every legal paper that was to go back to the air force. If you go back into the files now, you'll see that the names



of the 2 city commissions are there, with the mayor in the center.

We were scared that the Nellis contracts would not go through. At that time, we were in not too good condition, and bringing an air force base in here would just . . . the prosperity would return.

[Johnny Russell was removed from office by the City Board on May 12, 1941, and he died shortly after on July 19, 1941.—ed.]

We finally got it set so that Las Vegas was to become the aerial gunnery school. They started in selling it up. The first thing that they had to have was water, so they drilled one dry well; they drilled a second dry well, and they drilled a third dry well. They were about to move the whole operation out of southern Nevada because of the lack of water. Bob Griffith and Al Corradetti, who was a city commissioner and had a cleaning establishment here and had quite a bit of money, bought the Range Ranch, which is about a quarter of a mile west of where the airport is now. Along with that ranch went water rights, and that is the way they got their water to Nellis and saved the base.

They constructed the base without thinking anything about where they were going to house the people who were in the base or how the officers were going to be domiciled in the community. Congress did this. I met the first cadre of the air force, and they were looking for houses for the officers. It just happened that it was the end of the school year, and a lot of teachers were leaving and were willing to lease their homes during the summertime to give these people an opportunity to find housing of their own. I was sort of the unofficial billeting officer of the air base.

Bob Griffith was very active in seeing that things went along as they should. He, as

secretary of the Chamber of Commerce, was interested in the leases and how they were getting along and if they were going to build and so forth. So he and I became more or less the fathers, so to speak, of the air base out there. They got the base built, all of their buildings that they needed for the operation, but they didn't have any place to put their people that came in here. The kids lived in tents for a long time. It was summertime and they really had a rough day their first summer here.

When they started operating—or trying to operate—the gunnery school, they found out that they didn't have any money for any materials that they needed: guns and that sort of stuff. The training involved starting with BB guns; then it went to .22s; then it went to shotguns; then it went to skeet guns, and then it went to the .50-caliber machine guns. That was the area in which they trained, and they didn't have any of that stuff. So, the people of the city of Las Vegas donated guns to them—all the guns that they needed—through a drive that was started by the Review-Journal, and that was supplied.

Then they needed targets. They didn't have any targets, so Jim Cashman loaned them several trucks that they turned into moving targets. That was what they started out with.

Of course, when the war started, they poured money in there that went to training and everything, and it developed into a base. But if it hadn't been for the people of the city of Las Vegas, they wouldn't have had anything to work with, or it would have been delayed. That was one of the reasons that there is such great rapport between the air base and the community, as there is now.

*When it was first discovered they were going to put this gunnery school in the area, were all*

*segments in the community happy and eager to have it?*

Oh, yes. That was going to bring people to Las Vegas. They didn't realize that it was going to bring too many people. But we managed to muddle through, as the English say, and get it underway. The people of Las Vegas didn't care about who the people were—they were here, and they were spending money, and we were helping develop the war machine, so there was no conflict whatever.

*What kinds of concerns did the military have about bringing young men into a city like Las Vegas that, after all, had a reputation of being wide open, having gambling, prostitution?*

As far as the morale of the soldiers were concerned, it wasn't bad, but the mothers and fathers of the kids who were brought into Las Vegas had naturally heard of the houses of prostitution. Gambling was just starting in Las Vegas at that time, although it was pretty well publicized. The mothers and fathers became convinced that their sons were going to be defiled by the attitudes that they had in Las Vegas. The military gave notice to the city commission that unless the houses of prostitution were closed, they would make the city of Las Vegas off limits to all personnel. It was necessary, of course, to move or close Block 16. So they closed the block and moved the prostitutes out into the county. The city just closed them up. The girls were given licenses, and the licenses were just ineffective. They just closed them down and that was the end of that.

*Were they business licenses?*

Well, yes. Most of them had business licenses . . . liquor and some gambling, very little slot machines usually.

*So, the city used their licensing authority to shut them down?*

Right. Well, the houses of prostitution were just permitted by the people. There was no state law that said they could either operate or they couldn't. And then as far as the gambling is concerned, that wasn't too bad, because they said that they could control the operation out there so that the military would not be embarrassed.

*Were the gambling houses popular with the military?*

Not especially, because most of the kids were underage, and they wouldn't get in anyway. So the gambling continued to operate, although they did have curfew on the sale of drinks. The sale of drinks to any military personnel closed at 12:00.

*What happened to the Block 16 people? Where did they go?*

They went out to Four-Mile, which is about 4 miles out of the city on Boulder Highway. They operated from there. Eddie Clippinger had that establishment out there, and then they just gathered around on the streets. It showed that the control was better in a certain place where the police could control them. The mothers and fathers didn't know about that. It still goes for the streetwalkers out there. You can recall about 4 years ago, they had all these prostitutes that were openly soliciting out there. Until

John Moran came in as sheriff, they were just almost free to roam wherever they wanted to go. It's easier if you put them in a restricted district, I think. That is the theory that the state of Nevada operates under. There is no law that prohibits prostitution in the state of Nevada. It's a county thing, and it's tolerated. It's illegal, but nobody pays any attention to it. [Brothel prostitution has been illegal in Clark County by state statute since 1971.—ed.]

*It is interesting that in this case the city was willing to compromise with the open town idea.*

Well, they couldn't do much else, because had Las Vegas been made a closed city to the military personnel, the base would have done us no good.

*You wanted the base more than you wanted prostitution?*

Definitely. Oh, sure. Pay more dividends in taxes.

*What about problems of merchants gouging the military?*

There wasn't any problem as far as we ever heard of. We never heard of any complaints of gouging or anything of that sort, although, if you recall, they had all this rationing: meat rationing, shoe rationing, gasoline rationing. We did have a couple of incidents where some of the military personnel who were involved in purchasing were kicking off a lot of meat to people here. One nightclub was opened entirely because they could supply steaks where nobody else could. It was a black market deal. They had a trial out there at the

base and court-martialed a colonel who was in charge of the commissary. It was that type we had trouble with, not the fact that the local people were gouging them.

*Was the local man who was responsible for buying this meat reprimanded in any way? Was he in trouble?*

Let me say that his Colony Club burned down about 2 or 3 months after the man was convicted. Nobody else was ever prosecuted out there at the base as far as I know.

*Was there any apparent black market in town, people having access to materials?*

No. We were involved in the war. Las Vegas was very, very good as far as supporting the war effort was concerned. Anytime they had a bond drive, they always went over their quota, and the Red Cross always was able to make their quota and more. The community just was absolutely 100 percent behind the base out there. The officers of the military were sort of melded into the community. They attended many of the parties and stuff of that sort that were given by the local socialites. They got along very well—very well, indeed. As far as that's concerned, the entire military, including the enlistees and the non-coins, were welcomed into homes in Las Vegas. People would send out invitations to the base and say, "We have room for 4 people for Sunday dinner; have you got any kids that would like to come in?" Las Vegas was very cooperative as far as the base was concerned.

*Did you know of any hostilities between local boys and the boys at the base?*

The only problem that we had was with the blacks. The blacks at the air base would come in and steal the local black boys' girlfriends, and that created some commotion, but the police department handled it very well.

*There was no such competition between local white boys and white boys at the base?*

No. There were quite a few of the local girls who married kids at the base. They were part of the family.

*Did the influx of people put any extra strain on the local police force?*

Oh, yes. Of course, the air base cooperated in that they sent their air policemen in to help out the local police department. Through that, they were able to control the thing pretty well.

*You didn't have to add any men to your own policing staff?*

Oh, yes, the police department was expanded. But if it hadn't have been for the air police, we'd've been in trouble.

*Did the Chamber of Commerce play any special role as liaison between the town and the base?*

Yes, they were very, very good about that. The classes of gunnery students would come in here for a period of 6 weeks. They were never allowed off the base. They were at the base 24 hours a day, and their training was about 16 hours a day. So they were pretty well tied up. One Christmas the Chamber of Commerce decided that, with the permission of the air base officials out there, they would put on a Christmas party for the kids and give them dinner at the hotels that were operating at the time: the Last Frontier, the

El Rancho, the Green Shack and the Biltmore Hotel, which was down at Main and Bonanza. The Flamingo wasn't built at that time. We had Christmas dinners for all of these kids. Santa Claus came out and visited all the kids and gave candy. I can always remember at the Last Frontier . . . there was a fireplace in one of the bars there, and these kids were congregated around the fireplace—they were contemplating that this might be the last Christmas that they'd ever have, because they were being shipped out. As we were sitting there in the Ramona Room, the band was playing "White Christmas," and you could just see the tears dripping from these kids' eyes. It just thrills the dickens out of me every time I tell it, because it was just a beautiful scene. And that's how the Chamber of Commerce and the local people were with the military. The military was melded into the community very well, just like they were visitors.

*I also noticed that the paper ultimately had a special column for military concerns.*

Yes. We not only had a special column, but we printed their base newspaper, and I've forgotten what the name of it was. We printed it on the press. They were just like relatives from the East or the West or wherever. They were accepted very well.

Martinus Stenseth was the first commanding officer at Nellis. He was a very, very nice gentleman. He would be like your Uncle Louie. He could be stern, or he could be very, very nice. He was one of the most respected commanders that they've ever had out there.

When the first cadre came in here, it was an engineering cadre. They were laying out the field and doing what they were supposed to do. They had their office down in the basement of the post office building on the

end of Third Street. Every afternoon at 5:00 was happy hour at the Apache Bar. Bob and I and a couple of other local people would join with the military people that wanted to have a drink. We'd go over to the Apache and have a couple of toddies before dinner, and that was when I was first introduced to a Salty Dog. They used salt instead of sugar, and they're called Salty Dogs.

*After the war started to wind down, there must have been some concern that you were going to lose this potential . . .*

Not only concern, but the air base was shut down twice. It was shut down right after the war, and they were going to give it to the surplus GSA [General Services Administration] outfit in Washington to sell. Through McCarran and . . . maybe it was Pittman—anyway, through our congressional delegation back there, we convinced the air force that they should have the thing as some sort of a base. So they made it a navigation officers' base. Maybe it operated for a year or 2 as this navigation base. It was more or less of a housekeeping deal, just to keep it open.

*Do you know what the dealings were to get it open? Do you know how that progressed; did you have anything to do with that?*

Only through McCarran. It was all done through Washington.

*Did the Chamber of Commerce have certain people who worked on this?*

Oh, yes, they were very interested in it, and they were working on Pat and I think it was Pittman—I'm not sure, but whoever the other senator was. They worked on them, and the senators worked on the GSA. Finally,

the air force kept it open as a navigation officers' deal. Then they wiped that out, and we thought we'd lost it for sure, but through maneuvers in Washington again it was opened as a gunnery school, because they had found out during the war that these gunners who were trained here and in the other bases were much more efficient than those that didn't have any training. They decided that with all of this range that they had here that they could make it a military base for a gunnery school. From a gunnery school, it's got to where it is now. The operation out there is . . . you just can't imagine what it is. It's very highly secret, but sometimes we who know the right people out there get to know a little about it . . . not very much. I knew before Doolittle flew over Japan that he was going to make his trip and where he was training for it, because despite the tact that I was a newspaperman, they trusted me. [Mr. Cahlan is referring to the bombing of Tokyo. He says that he was not aware of the exact nature of the mission.—ed.] That's something that they haven't got now anywhere in the United States. You can't trust any newspaperman to keep a secret.

*When the military came in here permanently, that meant Las Vegas had to have its own field, its own commercial fields. Where was the first Western Express field located?*

The Western Air Express field was originally where the Sahara parking lot is, on Paradise Road. That was the original place, and it was owned by a Leigh Hunt, who was a developer. I think that Leigh Hunt bought the property from the Rockwell brothers, because it was originally known as Rockwell Field when Western Airlines came in here in 1926. Leigh Hunt continued the allowance of the airplanes to land there, until just about the time the war started. Then Mr. Hunt told



Western that they'd have to get off the field. It wasn't because of the war—he wanted to do something with it, develop it or something himself.

It was at the time that Western had to move. Pop Simon had property out where the present Nellis Air Force Base is. So Western leased that, and they were operating when the air force came in here and wanted some property to land on, and it was decided that that was the best place for it. For several years—maybe 2 years—Western Air and the air force operated off the field there. Then the government decided that they wanted to take that over, so they told Western that they were going to have to quit using the base as a landing field. So Western had to find new quarters. They went off to where the present McCarran Field is.

*Who owned the land?*

George Crocket had developed that as a private plane landing field airport. He had developed one landing strip out there, I think. The government paid partially for the upgrading of the field out there. However, the majority of the money that's been spent out there at the present McCarran site has been spent by the county.

*Ultimately a bond issue was passed, but I've also found that there was some opposition to the initial proposal to have a permanent military field and new municipal field for Las Vegas. Can you tell me what the source of opposition was?*

I don't know. I can't tell you the source of it, but there was a sort of a semi-general debate on the thing as to whether the county needed 2 airports. But the government was

adamant, and they said that nobody could occupy that field but the air force. During the time that the air force told Western that they couldn't use it, the Chamber of Commerce set up a committee, of which I was a member, to try to find a new site for commercial aviation. Western Air was going to have to get off it. There couldn't be dual use. Three sites were selected: one in the western part, about where The Lakes is now, and one down in the eastern part of the community, at the intersection of Charleston and Fremont in that area that was formerly occupied by the Meadows, where Montgomery Ward is now, and the Crockett base that had been semi-developed by him. They decided that the Crockett base would be the best place, so they leased the ground from Crockett and gave him a lifelong lease of a possible area where the Hughes Airport now is developed. That was the way that became the official airport for the county.

*I've read that the Junior Chamber of Commerce initially opposed the bonds to build the airport. Why was that?*

Well, I think that may be true. There were a bunch of kids who had come back from the war, and I think that they were fed up with the fact that the military would be in here. Now, I'm not sure of that. This is my own theory, but they opposed it. They just didn't want anything more to do with the army.

*What about the gambling interests? I've also read that some of them were opposed to the idea of a permanent military base.*

They were afraid that the military would reach out and expand to such an extent that casinos would have to close. They were afraid that they were going to be closed down.



*Did you ever think that was a serious possibility?*

Not in the least. I thought the military would tolerate the gambling. There wasn't any reason why they shouldn't, because, as far as the base was concerned at that time, it was a semi-permanent base, and they had all of their officers and all of their men established out there. They could do whatever they wanted to. If they closed the gambling area to the base, that wouldn't affect the gambling community, because the people out there didn't have that kind of money.

*You didn't think that the powers in the military would see gambling as a negative in the long run?*

Well, we weren't so concerned with the military as we were with Congress. [laughter] We had Pat McCarran and Alan Bible back there who exerted quite a great deal of influence in the Congress. We more or less left it up to them to protect our interests, and they did it very well.

*By putting a large, permanent base here, did you think it might draw national attention to gambling? And this, in turn, could lead to a national crackdown?*

Sure. This was the way the opponents felt. As far as we were concerned, we didn't think that that would be possible. The Chamber of Commerce was not concerned. They were all for the bond issue. I think that the city has turned out to be 5 times what it was at that time, that the air base and the airport brought in more people than we ever thought possible. It's another one of those instances where we were just lucky. This last bond issue that was passed to upgrade the airport out there had

practically no opposition. [This refers to the bond issue supporting the renovation of McCarran International Airport in the mid-1980s.—ed.]

*Do you know what turned the tide for the original bond in 1947? Obviously, people changed their minds.*

I think it was the Chamber of Commerce and the drive that they put on. They put on a tremendously successful drive for it.

*Was the Junior Chamber of Commerce won over by your efforts?*

I don't think that they were won over, but they were silenced, let's say, because they saw the way the wind was blowing, and they just didn't want to get caught in the hurricane. There's no doubt about it. All the businessmen in the Chamber of Commerce, the Rotary Club, the Kiwanis Club and all of the people that were at the top of the heap as far as power was concerned, were all in favor of this. In the beginning, we may have felt that it was endangered, but after it got rolling, there wasn't any stopping it.

*In addition to the gunnery school (Nellis Air Force Base) Las Vegas benefitted from World War II when it was decided that a major magnesium processing plant would be built here. Do you recall when you learned that BMI (Basic Magnesium, Incorporated) would be built?*

It was early in the war. The Japs hadn't bombarded Pearl Harbor yet. It was during the time that we entered the European war. I think that the first information that we got came from Howard Eells. He came

in here on this dealing with the Colorado River Commission. My brother was on the Colorado River Commission at that time, so we knew that it was coming in here.

The reason that they built it here was that they had a magnesium plant over in England, which was producing practically all the magnesium that they were using in the war. They decided that they needed another manufacturing plant, so they decided to build one in the United States. Howard Eells had Basic Refractories; it was his Cleveland factory. He dealt in magnesium. He and a man from England—it was Major somebody; I've forgotten his name—inspected all the areas. They decided that this would be a good place because it fit, generally, the area that was producing the magnesium in England.

Eells had some property up in Gabbs that produced the ore that was made into the magnesium. It was just about the same distance from the mine to Las Vegas as it was in England from the mine producing into their factory. Gabbs is up near Tonopah—the other side of Tonopah. So they decided that this was the place to do it. They had this land out around Henderson, which the United States government owned, and they decided that they would put the plant there. [Henderson was established as a result of the BMI plant.—ed.]

The question was to get the magnesium ore in from Gabbs to Las Vegas. The only way that they could get it was trucking. They would have had to truck the stuff in right down Fremont Street, so they decided that they would build a new road. That is the road that connects the Tonopah highway with Charleston Boulevard that goes by the hospital and out that way. That was constructed by the government to miss the downtown area of Las Vegas.

Also, they had to build their plant out there. The McNeil Brothers construction company was the successful bidder on the building. They started building the plant. The office building was the main artery of the plant, and they built that one first. The building was nearly completed, and there was a big fire out there that completely demolished the whole building. There was some talk of sabotage. They never were able to prove any sabotage, but it was generally felt that it was sabotage. It was a rumor around the workmen out there. Larry McNeil, I would say, was the man who told me that it was possible sabotage. Larry McNeil was the head of the McNeil Construction Company, which was building the plant, and he said it looked suspicious to him, and that's as far as he went. But the assumption was that we were lighting Germany, and they didn't want the United States to get any more magnesium, so that was the only way that they could get even. As I say, it was more or less of a rumor, and Larry McNeil said it could be sabotage.

It was strange because the heart of the office building was the telephone system, which included the old-fashioned plug boards that were used to connect the office with the agencies, or would be used for that. They couldn't find one anywhere in the United States. They searched all over, and they finally found one in West Virginia, I believe, and flew it out here to be placed in the new building. The embers were still hot when the McNeil people went in there and cleared it out to start building again. They set a record for building a new building; 24 hours a day they were working on the thing. They finally completed it in record time.

After the offices were all established, they started in building the other parts of the plant. It took quite some time, of course. I can't tell

you when the first magnesium was produced out there. I don't know whether they really produced any magnesium—I think they did. But it was so near the end of the war that the magnesium plant was not used very long. There was no use for the magnesium, which had been used for fire bombing Germany.

It was quite a plant. Here again, a lot of people were dumped in here to man the plant, and we had problems again with law enforcement and schools and all of those things, about the same thing that we had when Nellis came in there and when the dam came in here. We've had 3 construction jobs that really cost the county money then, but they certainly have justified themselves.

*When you learned that they were going to build BMI, did you believe that this would lay a foundation for an industrial future for Las Vegas?*

We were hoping that it would, but we were not sure that it wouldn't be demolished right after the war. It apparently would become surplus property, and they'd turn it over to GSA. In fact, they did turn it over, and there were negotiations that were designed to tear the thing down. There are several stories that are connected with the building of the magnesium plant and the way that it was saved by the state of Nevada.

In the first place, they had to have water for their manufacturing plant. My brother and, I believe, Ed Clark and John Mueller—a member of the Colorado River Commission who had quite a great deal of political clout in northern Nevada and with Alan Bible and Pat McCarran, United States Senators from Nevada—met with Eells. They were talking about water coming from the Colorado River and how they would get it to the Basic plant.

There was discussion among the people there, and Eells suggested that they were going to have to run a pipeline into Basic anyway, so they might as well expand the circumference of the pipeline to a point where if Las Vegas ever needed any more water they could hook on to this enlarged pipeline and bring it into Las Vegas. That was where the first water from Lake Mead was brought into this area. That was another profit that we got from the government: they practically built, I would say, a third of the water system for the Las Vegas Valley Water District, and it cost Las Vegas nothing.

After the production stopped out there they were talking about making it surplus property and either razing it or selling it to whoever was interested. Apparently there was no one interested in the plant except the state of Nevada. A deal was worked out where the government would sell the plant to the state of Nevada for one dollar down. They could repay the cost at whatever it was set at—I'm not sure of the cost at that—but, anyway, the state of Nevada got the plant.

It was then that they started in talking about a chemical center out there. John Mueller and Julian Moore were negotiating with the government. They got this plan arranged, and the Colorado River Commission took over the sale of the property to the chemical plants. Stauffer and several other agencies were interested in doing a job here because of the low cost of water and power. This was the selling point that the Colorado River Commission had in trying to bring these people in here. It was quite a battle to get agencies that would be interested in using it. For 2 or 3 years it was a shaky proposition. They finally got it to a place where it is now. They had these operators who were willing to come in here

and use the facilities and pay the state of Nevada. I am not sure, but I think the plant is now paid for by the state of Nevada.

*Did you know Howard Eells?*

Yes, very well. I met with him several times among other people. I would go there as the reporter to report the goings-on in the meetings, and I became very well acquainted with Howard Eells. In fact, they had a luncheon to honor Eells out there, and I was invited to the luncheon. He was a very, very affable man. He had made a very big success of his operation in Cleveland. He was a real good hydraulic engineer. He and the Colorado River Commission got along very well together. He wanted to get the plant underway and did everything that he could to help whoever was putting it up.

*Did he reside in the area while . . .*

I think he commuted between here and Cleveland. He'd come in maybe once or twice a month to see how things were getting along.

*Did Eells think the plant would be permanent? What kind of future did he see?*

I think that he got the Colorado River Commission interested in trying to save the plant and lease it or sell it or whatever. I think that he did a lot of maneuvering in his political field to get the state so that they could buy it.

*At the time it was built, do you think he saw it as something that would be scavenged in the end?*

I think that was his underlying belief, but he had hope. I believe that [he talked about the

state buying it] at this luncheon. It was near the end of the talks between the Colorado River Commission and the government. I think that he probably gave the Colorado River Commission the spark that was needed to get them to go out and try to develop this as a chemical center.

*You mentioned that this plant required large numbers of new people to come in to both build the plant itself and work in it. Where did those BMI workers live? Where were they housed?*

They were housed in housing developments out there. In fact, a new town was built out there where Henderson is now. That was part of the project.

*How did the city feel about building a separate town site out by the plant? Would you have preferred that those people live in Las Vegas and commute to the plant?*

I don't think that there was any argument out there. When they were building the plant, they also were building the community for the workers. And they were both finished about the same time.

*Did the government want the workers living right by the plant?*

Apparently, yes.

*Do you think that had anything to do with the reputation of Las Vegas?*

No. There was no discussion about gambling out there at Henderson, because it was a government reservation. There was no gambling or liquor allowed.

*Do you think they were afraid that the workers, if they lived in Las Vegas, might have problems in those areas?*

Could have been. But at the time there was no discussion whatever about the fact that Las Vegas had the reputation that it did and had the image that it did.

*What about local businessmen? Were they concerned that they might lose the business of these workers?*

No, they were very optimistic about it, as they had been all through the history from Boulder Dam on through. The more people who came into the valley, the more profits they would make. They were certain that Las Vegas was the center of the valley, as far as population and trade. They were very happy to have it here. The thinking of the Chamber of Commerce was that what was good for the valley was good for Las Vegas.

*Did they worry that there might be a company store—the kind of thing that happened when the dam was built?*

No. It was a war project. When they first started it, it was a war project, and there were no arguments as far as anybody was concerned.

*I understand from my reading that there were some people in Las Vegas who were displeased with the town site.*

Well, of course, the local people were greedy, let's say, and they wanted all the development to be in Las Vegas. Even though the plant was in Henderson, they didn't have any great amount of merchandising

out there, and most of the people came in here to shop.

*Do you know which merchants might have been unhappy about the town site?*

I can't point anybody out specifically, but there were some of the people who wanted more business, and they were quite perturbed because the town site was made out there. It was just sort of a displeasure on the part of some people. As far as any of the members of the Chamber of Commerce, they were not perturbed about it, because it was another development.

*The relationship, then, between Eells and the city of Las Vegas was quite friendly and . . .*

Oh, yes. He was another savior for the city of Las Vegas. [laughter]

*I want to also ask you specifically about the fire that you mentioned earlier. Senator Berkeley Bunker said that the records were "conveniently burned to hide the facts about BMI's operation." What was he referring to there?*

There was some conflict back in Washington that this was another one of the overruns, that it was costing more than it should have cost. But the fact that they had the fire and had to rebuild it so fast, I can see that the cost overrun would be quite tremendous. I don't think that Senator Berkeley Bunker understood the problem.

*Do you think that he had any inside information about what was going on there?*

I would doubt it. He never talked to me about it, and I never heard of anybody that he



talked to. It was another one of those things that happened during the war. They were always investigating some place where the cost was too much or something of that sort, and it was never proven. As far as I know there was nothing of that sort going on.

Harry Truman came in here as the chairman of the Truman Committee, which was a traveling committee. It went around and visited all of these war plants that were being built to find out whether they were overrun or whether the government was getting what they paid for. Very fortunately, for me, at least, I went out to El Rancho where Truman and the committee's attorney were living. I spent an evening with Truman at his cabana out there at El Rancho.

*Did you discuss the BMI plant?*

He just told me that they were investigating whether there was any possibility of cheating or whatever—overrun on the cost. It was a very enjoyable visit. Neither he nor the attorney gave me any information about cost overruns. We sat out there drinking bourbon for about 3 or 4 hours. He didn't give me any inside information. It was just a general conversation as to what he was doing, how he was getting along with his committee, where he was going from here and where he'd been. It was just merely more or less of an interview with him—not dealing entirely with the Basic plant.

*The Senate Committee described the plant's operation as one of the most flagrant attempts at war profiteering that had come to the committee's attention. Do you know anything about that?*

No, that's all that I know, and I don't know that they ever followed that up. I did

not attend . . . in fact, I think the hearings were closed. Eells may have been blamed by the investigating committee, but to my knowledge—and I knew Eells pretty well—I don't think that there was any highjinks going on or any cheating or any overrun.

*You've already mentioned the labor situation. There was quite a labor shortage in the country at the time because of the war.*

Yes, there was, all over the country. Most of these people who came to work at BMI came from Tallulah, Alabama. There was another place in the South from which the blacks were brought in here, because they didn't think that the whites could stand the summer climate. I think that idea came from the Basic management out there. [The 2 sources of black workers were Tallulah, Louisiana and Fordyce, Arkansas.—ed.] The operation of the plant out there created a great deal of heat—and I mean physical heat. Too hot to live in.

*Did BMI appeal to the Chamber of Commerce to help in recruiting and keeping workers?*

No, not that I remember. I know that the Chamber of Commerce was always willing to do whatever they could to keep the plant here. I don't know that the Chamber of Commerce ever did any great interference with any of the operation at Henderson when the war was on and when it was being operated by the government. After the war was over, Basic Magnesium was not necessary in the war effort, and the Chamber of Commerce got behind the Colorado River Commission and tried to develop that as a chemical center. It was after the war that the Chamber of Commerce became vitally interested in trying to keep the plant here.



*I have read that judges in Los Angeles used to send vagrants out here to work at the plant. Do you remember anything about that?*

I think that Los Angeles was doing the same thing during Basic Magnesium building as we did when they were building Boulder Dam. I know that the judges in Los Angeles did ship the vagrants out from Los Angeles to get rid of them.

*Did you know of any individual judges who did that?*

No.

*As many as 22,000 people worked at BMI to till about 3,600 jobs. There was quite a turnover.*

Tremendous turnover, yes, because the plant wasn't exactly a good place to work. There was all this heat. The plant, as far as I was concerned, was kind of jerry-built. It was a fast job during war times, and they did the best they could with the equipment they had. It wasn't the fault of the contractors.

Working conditions weren't the best. There was enough danger out there. They were working with acids and things like that. I think there were a couple of times when there were several people hurt out there. But there was no great problem. It just wasn't a good place to work—very hot, and they had a lot of chlorine out there. That was a problem that they had. I don't know that they wore gas masks; nobody did that I remember. I don't think there was anybody who was really affected by the chlorine, but it was a danger.

*As you have noted, the opportunities at BMI set up a chain migration of workers from the South. My reading shows that the black population went from under 200 to 2,000 or*

*so. Now, that was a phenomenal growth. Were any people in the community concerned that the area would not be able to absorb this large number of blacks coming in from the South?*

Yes, there were. It was in the back of people's minds that this thing might result in something that would develop into something we didn't want, like racial riots. There was not too much fire developed out there between the blacks and the whites. They worked together and did a pretty good job.

*I believe the blacks had a separate living situation.*

Yes, there was. [The black housing development was Carver Park.-ed.] They lived there quite in peace with everybody, including themselves. I think the thing that was in the minds of the people who were working out there was that they were contributing to the war effort, and nothing should interfere with that operation.

*What about people in Las Vegas looking over there and seeing this large number of blacks coming in?*

They were privately concerned that this might develop into something else. It was discussed in general conversations, maybe at club meetings or man-to-man or things like that. There was nothing public as far as the discussions were concerned.

*Was it a concern that they would stay here rather than leave the area?*

That's right. It doesn't make any difference who comes in here—whether they're black, white, brown or red—they get into this climate, and they are much more satisfied

than they would be anywhere else. That is not a Chamber of Commerce statement, because it's been proven by many, many people coming here to work, leaving and coming back to retire.

The reason that the Westside was developed as it is today is the fact that many of these people in Henderson at the plant moved over onto the Westside. At that time I won't say it was segregated, because as far as I knew, there was no segregation. I mean they just chose to live over there, and that's where they developed. It was a rather scary situation when the negotiations for the plant with these chemical companies were concerned; it was a little scary that we'd have problems with the blacks.

In the conversations that I had with the general public, here again was the fact that you could do anything in the city of Las Vegas that you were big enough to do, if you didn't step on somebody's toes. I think that the blacks accepted that slogan or whatever it was—that feeling. I think generally that we have had very, very little problem with riots or anything like that between the blacks and the whites. There were some segregated conditions at the plant—segregated toilets and facilities; housing was separate. There were things of that sort that weren't the best for the blacks. But coming from the South, I think that they accepted that as something that they had to live with.

I don't know who set up segregated facilities. I would imagine that it was set up by the operators—whoever they were. But as far as I knew, relations on a daily basis didn't create any friction or problems. In general, I learned this from conversations with people around Henderson who would come into the office and talk to me and from some of the officials out there. They had no problem.

*In October of 1943, 200 blacks walked off the job to protest certain conditions—discrimination*

*of various sorts, segregated facilities. Do you remember that incident?*

I believe that I remember the incident, but I am not familiar with the inner operations of what caused the thing. That was when the plant was closing down, I believe. It was on its way out. [The plant operated until November, 1944.—ed.] I don't know who was operating it at that time. I think the government still had the operation. But I remember there was some unrest out there. That was the first incident of the segregation that developed publicly in Las Vegas and Henderson.

I never went out there during that time. The newspaper covered meetings and any information that came out of these meetings, but we did not send anybody out there to cover the story.

*You don't know if there were any individual black leaders involved in this?*

No, I don't. I don't remember any of the names of the people who were out there. I'm not sure of this, but I think Julian Moore operated the plant at this time, because he took over as manager . . . Basic management. Those years are kind of fuzzy with me because I was trying to operate a newspaper, when bums came in the front door and went out the back. [Reference concerns the problem of finding workers for the paper during the war years.—ed.]

Of course, we didn't want stories of this type going out of Las Vegas, but it was a general . . . I believe this was the start of the desegregation movement. It not only was happening in Las Vegas, but it was happening all over the United States, so it was not anything that would darken the image of Las Vegas, because it was just part of a trend.

*After this trouble, did BMI stop hiring blacks?*

I was not familiar with their hiring processes.

*Did your brother ever go to BMI to talk to black workers about the problems there?*

Not that I know of. We were not interested in promoting racial problems. The newspaper was going to let nature take its own course, as far as the blacks were concerned. We were neither for nor against them.

*Any black contacts in town whom he might have consulted?*

I doubt it. Being a member of the Colorado River Commission, Al naturally was interested in what was going on out at BMI. He talked mostly to McNeil. When Eells was in town Al talked to him, but he wasn't in town very much after the plant got into operation, or during the latter part of the building. I think McNeil was his best source out there.

At one point the Fair Employment Practices Commission came in—the FEPC. I remember they were in here, but there again, we didn't pay too much attention to it. The war was still going on with Japan. We were more interested in the war and the effect that it had on the community and its citizens than we were in little things like race feelings. I think the underlying factor of bringing that group in here was racial discrimination.

*Were you unhappy to see them come here?*

No, we thought that if there was something that was going on that wasn't kosher that it should be exposed. So far as I recall, none of our reporters had any problems with them in

getting information. They covered what went on and the complaints that were lodged.

*I found an editorial which appeared in your brother's column, "From Where I Sit." It begins, "Eleanor's Fair Labor Practices Committee has been in Las Vegas." Obviously, he was referring to Eleanor Roosevelt. I gather that he didn't hold her in high regard.*

Not too much, because she was linked with these unions that were a little scary. I mean, the people were a little scared about what they could do if they really came in here. He saw her as a supporter of union activities. That was a general opinion all over the United States.

*Was he getting at Franklin Roosevelt, himself, by criticizing his wife?*

Well, no. Eleanor was quite powerful in her own right back there in Washington. Whatever she wanted, Franklin usually gave it to her. She was very active in politics. Roosevelt, himself, felt that was a good idea. Al objected to Eleanor mostly, personally. [laughter] If you knew the Democratic party at that time, she was the sweetheart of the Democratic party . . . definitely of the most liberal wing of the party if there was a liberal wing then. I don't know that there was any much of a conservative wing of the party at that time. It was all pretty much Roosevelt's policies that the general public believed in. In his fireside chats and with his personality Roosevelt could put over most anything. I think that he was quite an egotist. He had ideas, and he had a very powerful personality on radio. You could sit and listen to him in the fireside chats, and he'd win you over. He was a great deal like Reagan, when he appeared on the screen or wherever he appeared. Roosevelt

was really a great man. At that time we didn't have all this furor about what the president was doing, like we have now. He could convince you that he was right. He started that New Deal. The New Deal was generally accepted by most everybody, because he was there at the height of the Depression, and he started cooling it off. That's the reason that he was elected for a third term.

*Your brother's editorial on the FEPC hearings clearly expresses dissatisfaction with them. That's the thrust of the editorial, as far as I can see.*

This is true. Roosevelt and Eleanor had these ideas of the New Deal. I'm sure from talking to my brother that he was afraid that if this went on, we'd have a dictator in the United States before he got out. I think that his fear was fired by a lot of stuff that McCarran told him. McCarran was against Roosevelt. McCarran was the one who beat the bill that Roosevelt wanted of enlarging the Supreme Court so that he could get approval of his New Deal objectives.

I think Al was one of the first persons in southern Nevada who believed that Roosevelt was going to take over. States' rights would go out the window. We were quite exercised in having control coming from Washington, which it did, and it still does. You can take this 55-mile speed limit. The government in Washington says that we're going to have to go 55 miles an hour, and if we don't we won't get any road money. Well, now that's not democracy according to Al and according to my thinking.

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## THE EMERGENCE OF A BLACK NEIGHBORHOOD IN WEST LAS VEGAS, 1940S-1950S

*In the early forties the nation experienced race riots in Detroit, Beaumont, Texas . . . .*

I think they were noticed, but the people were not concerned, because the blacks who came into Las Vegas were of . . . I don't say a higher type than the others, but they were able to accept the rules and regulations that we had in Las Vegas, in the valley. While they are not the best, they are not the worst either. I think that they have gone along and done exactly what the whites did when they were building the community. They had accepted these things and got behind the development of the community, and I think you will find that most of the leaders of the blacks on the Westside are involved in the growth. They do have problems—there isn't any doubt about it—but as far as the 1940s were concerned, we didn't have any great amount of rioting and burning of buildings and things of that sort.

*There was a clash between soldiers and police on the Westside.*

That developed as a result of Nellis, because as I think I told you before, the blacks on the Westside were not very favorably impressed with the blacks from Nellis who would come into the community and steal their girlfriends. It was a selfish motive that started the thing.

*Do you know how this clash was handled?*

It was just handled. Somebody went over there and talked to them and got them cooled down, and got them to thinking.

*I was under the impression that there was a larger issue concerning the authority of the police to handle soldiers. Was that one of the issues?*

Not that I remember, because I think that the air base had their police who were pretty well taken care of. I remember that the blacks on the Westside at that time organized what was to be a march on downtown Las

Vegas, but they were stopped at the Bonanza underpass. It was during the war, because it was the Nellis people who brought this about. I think the protest was related to the Nellis blacks coming in and taking the Westside blacks' girls away from them. I think that was the underlying factor behind that march. There may have been some other things that caused that march, but, according to the chief of police and the head of the security out there at Nellis, it was because the Nellis boys were coming in here and stealing all the girls.

Anyway, they were organizing a group to march on Las Vegas to ask for equal time or whatever—I don't know what the basic thing was. But as far as we were concerned—and we were the only newspaper in town, the only media in town—we gave them no space whatever. It was not publicized, and few people knew that it was being organized. The people of Nellis sent their air police in here to aid the local police. I have in the back of my memory that the mayor went over and talked to these people. I believe it was Mayor Gragson. Whoever it was went over and talked to them. They got the thing settled, and the organized march was dispersed, and that was it. I think there were some of the ministers over there who were involved in it. They were the leaders. We didn't pay any attention to it. We didn't give them any publicity like they're getting now.

*At one point the police closed an establishment called the Star Bar. Do you remember that place?*

The Star Bar was where all of the undesirables hung out. It was on the Westside.

*Was it owned by blacks?*

I think so, and it was closed because there had been so many events—shootings and knifings.

*I have also read that it served mixed clientele—whites and blacks. Was that a problem?*

I wouldn't be surprised, because there were quite a few whites over on the Westside that lived in perfect harmony with the blacks.

*Was this a contributing factor to closing the bar—this mixed clientele?*

I don't think so. I think that it was a development of racial events that blacks would shoot blacks and knife them and so forth.

*Was this place frequented by black soldiers from any of the bases in the area?*

I would say generally yes. How heavy it was, I can't tell you.

*There was another major incident in 1944 in which one black was killed and several people were injured. I believe it involved the Brown Derby Cafe. Do you recall that?*

Oh, yes, the Brown Derby. Well, there were incidents over there just the same as there are now . . . events that have the police called. I think that's still going on. I don't recall that the 1944 incident was any major event. As far as I am concerned, I don't know of any riots that we've had over there. There has been a lot of unrest over there. The blacks don't feel that they are being treated the same way the whites are, and I think that's still going on. I think it's going on everywhere in the United States.



*In this incident in 1944, do you know whether restrictions were placed on the sale of liquor to soldiers to try and stop problems?*

There may have been places on the Westside that were put off limits by the military. So you didn't have too many military clashes with the general public on the Westside.

*You told me how the community received soldiers from the base and the very congenial relations that prevailed. Do you know whether black soldiers were taken into community homes?*

Oh, yes.

*Would they go into Westside homes?*

No, I think that they were brought into the homes of the people who lived in Las Vegas. There was no great hatred for the blacks by the whites. It just grew up from the time that the theaters had certain places that the blacks should sit, and they couldn't stay in the hotels out on the Strip. But as far as any great feeling against them, I don't think there was any.

*Did the Westside change physically at this time? Did this huge influx of people put pressure on that area?*

Oh, it did, and there was a great deal of federal housing that was built over on the Westside. It changed in that it was cleaned up and made to look like a community. That happened after the war. [The first federal housing project for the Westside was undertaken in the early 1950s. In 1980 federal money was used to fund slum clearance on the Westside.-ed.]

*Were there slum conditions that were aggravated by the large numbers coming in?*

I would not call them slums; I would call them ghettos. There were over on the Westside some places that a white person would not be comfortable in going to the various places over there. There were not many white people who crossed the tracks.

*Did whites move out of the area at that time?*

No, they kept their places that they had over there. There was a white situation over there. Chet Gilbert—C. V. T. Gilbert—who was a city commissioner, had a grocery store over there. He had operated the store practically ever since the railroad came in. He was white and had very, very fine relations with the blacks over there. They patronized his store. Chet lived just as he would anyplace else. Chet got along very well with the people on the Westside. They trusted him, and he trusted them. Most of Bonanza Road—I won't say most of it, but a great deal of it—was populated by white people, and it still is.

*Do you remember Gilbert opening a store in Carver Park?*

Vaguely I remember that. Chet was quite active, and I think that I did hear about a store that he built out in Carver Park.

*Do you know of any other white merchants who went from the Westside of Las Vegas to Carver Park?*

No, the only other white merchant I knew of was Bob Moore, who had a feed store over on the Westside, and I don't know that he went out to Carver Park. My father-in-law,

B. M. Jones, had a grocery Store over on the Westside, but he went to work in the Basic plant after it was finished. There were very few white merchants over on the Westside. In fact, there were very few business houses over there—no clothing stores, no shoe stores or anything of that sort. They were served over on this side of town.

*What kinds of black businesses did spring up on the Westside in the forties?*

Mostly liquor—liquor and cafes.

*Do you remember Westside people living in tents, shacks, shanties?*

In the early 1930s, yes. There were people over there who, I guess, would be named as “white trash.” Those were people on the lower wage level, and they weren’t able to do very much else but live over there. The houses over there were not exactly good. The federal housing did a good job of building over there for the blacks.

*Do you remember during the war years—the BMI and the gunnery school years—whether conditions deteriorated?*

Ordinarily the blacks from Nellis and from Basic stayed where they were. If they came in for any entertainment or anything, they went onto the Westside. That was one of the reasons that the Moulin Rouge was built. That was supposed to be a black and tan place, but it never got off the ground. Florence and I were over there for the opening, and it was a real nice place.

*Reverend Henry Cook, a black minister, asked the city commission for Street improvements, especially on E Street.*

Yes, but he was turned down by the mayor and the city council, because they did not have any great amount of assessment valuation over there. There was no basis for setting up an improvement district. E Street was one of the business streets over there. It was unpaved; it was just a dirt lane. It was dusty. It was practically like the early days of Las Vegas—same thing as dirt streets. As I tell you, there was very little garbage collection. Most of the sanitary facilities were cesspools, and it was not a good place to live. Henry Cook appeared before the city commission, and he was given the information that there was no way that they could do it, because the city didn’t have the money, and they couldn’t set up an assessment district. They couldn’t do anything about it.

*Was it mostly Westside business people who wanted this improvement?*

I think it was general. The Westside wasn’t too highly populated at that time. I would doubt that there were more than 1,000 people there. When you crossed the railroad tracks, you were in a different community.

*Did any black businesses survive in the old downtown around Block 16?*

Yes, across the street from Block 16—that was their territory. That all disappeared. As I recall, there were no black business places left at all on this side of the tracks.

*How about black residents?*

None.

*Do you remember a black businessman called Boysie Ensley?*

Oh, yes. He was one of the leaders over on the Westside. It seems to me that he later became a member of the police department. Anyway, he was quite an effective leader over on the Westside. He was trying to develop and promote the Westside as a community and get the streets paved and get better housing for the people. He was as much enthused about the Westside as the white people were about this side of the tracks.

*In an interview with him, he claims that his father was "forced to the Westside," when the city would only issue a license if he would move his business there.*

I think that probably is true. I am not sure that it is, but under the circumstances and knowing as I did the operation of the city, I should say that was true. He was in the liquor business . . . I'm not sure.

*When we discussed the Strip earlier, you told me that the hotels were segregated. Were they segregated right from the start?*

Yes, they were. There was nothing that barred them, but they were not welcome there.

*I have seen the term "gentleman's agreement." Would that describe the enforcement mechanism behind that?*

It probably was, but I don't think that it was a "gentleman's agreement." I know that the Last Frontier people were from Texas. They had been brought up on segregation, and they operated their hotel on segregation. They had the same attitude as the people from the South. That attitude of the people of the Last Frontier was the beginning, because people

who were operating the hotels and motels of the community were afraid that the tourists from the other parts of the United States—California especially—would resent having to visit a place that was occupied by a black. I think this had more to do with it than any basic hatred of the blacks. It was just the fact that they wanted to keep their place what they called "clean," and this was the result of that. This was the attitude that the tourists took, and this is the attitude that the people of Las Vegas played to, so they could keep the white people coming in here. Even the black performers who were brought were not allowed to stay in the hotel. They had to stay in the Westside.

*This kind of attitude strikes me as rather different from the easier race relations that you talked about when Las Vegas was a very small town. Other than the segregated theater, you said that personal relationships were pretty easy.*

Oh, yes.

*This development on the Strip is quite a contrast.*

This is true, yes. Now, as I recall, I don't know about El Rancho, because Tommy Hull was not too segregation-minded. I can't remember that there was any complaint against El Rancho. I know there was against the Last Frontier. Well, not court complaints or anything of that sort. There was, I believe, a ban, let us say, on blacks performing at these hotels. That was their answer to the segregation. As far as the other hotels, the thing just sort of broke down—the ban on the blacks broke down, and they were accepted. When the equal rights thing developed, they had to admit blacks.

*Was there ever a boycott of Strip establishments by black entertainers?*

No, some of them were reluctant to come in here, but there was never an organized effort. They were getting too much money.

*Did Bill Moore's Last Frontier employ black entertainers?*

Oh, yes. A lot of times they were welcomed in the homes of the people on the Westside. I think that when the Moulin Rouge was operating, they stayed there, and I think there were a couple of small motels on the Westside. There were a couple of small motels that would accept the blacks.

*I have run across the name Ma Harrison. I have read that she would accommodate blacks coming through town. Do you remember her?*

I don't remember Ma Harrison. There was a Ma somebody who used to cook old-fashioned southern dinners. A lot of the white people would go down to her place for Sunday dinner. She lived on the east side of the tracks. She lived on Fourth Street—Third or Fourth. She was there when I came down. I think she was still there in the forties. I don't know when she died, but she died here. She was accepted because she was quite a nice lady, grandfathered in when Las Vegas was developed.

*I have read that Foxy's Restaurant was the only Strip establishment that served blacks. Do you know who owned that at the time?*

No, I don't. I don't know who Foxy was, but he wasn't particular about who went into his establishment. It was more or less of a

sawdust joint; I think it still is. It's not one of the popular places.

*Do you remember when blacks first appeared as service workers on the Strip?*

Yes. I think that it was when the hotels first opened, because I remember that not only blacks but Mexicans were hired as chambermaids and porters.

*When blacks came to work at BMI and serve in the military, did the number of blacks who worked in menial jobs increase?*

I would say not, because they were too busy doing what they were supposed to do.

*I understand that the Sands was the first major hotel to accommodate blacks. Do you recall when that occurred?*

I'm not sure of the date, but I think it was the Sands. It was just the Sands let them in, and the other places didn't. There was no great controversy over it.

*What other aspects of Las Vegas life were segregated in the 1940s? Were the schools segregated, for example?*

Semi, let's say. They had a school over on the Westside, and that was entirely occupied by the people on the Westside. It was an elementary school. It was a wooden structure. I was never in it, but the people who were in it told me that it was more or less like an old-fashioned school. It was a one-room school, and all of the grades were in that one school. It was kind of shabby. But, of course, at that time, there was only one other school in the city of Las Vegas. That was over where

the Federal Building is now. They had the kindergarten, elementary school and high school over there at that one place. In the forties they had the high school. It was over on Ninth Street.

The other elementary school that was in town at that time was built somewhere in the 1910s. It was to take care of the entire population of Las Vegas. It was a cement building. There were 3 buildings over there. They had the kindergarten by itself, and the elementary by itself, and then the high school was by itself.

*Were parks and swimming pools and places like that segregated?*

Swimming pools were segregated, but I can remember black kids playing on the football team at the Las Vegas High School in the 1930s. That's all there was, one high school. All the kids would come to this school, and they were integrated. The high school was integrated, and it just grew from there.

*I've read that the hospital had a separate ward for blacks and indigent people. Do you recall that?*

I would say that that is correct, that there was the county hospital, which now is the University Medical Center. It was more or less of a poor farm. That is where the indigents and the blacks were taken care of.

*Do you remember when the Westside Chamber of Commerce was formed?*

I would say it was around the 1950s. I think Boysie Ensley was one of the members, and the ministers over there played a great part in developing the community.

*It sounds as if there was a lot of self-help on the Westside.*

Definitely. They realized that if anybody was going to help them, they had to help themselves.

*Did the black Chamber of Commerce have anything to do with the white Chamber of Commerce?*

No. No joint meetings or anything of that sort. They developed an Elks Club over there on the Westside that was not officially connected with the Las Vegas Elks. I think the Masons had a lodge over there, and things of that sort. They kept pretty much to themselves.

There were some people from Las Vegas who belonged to the Progressive Party, which never got off the ground. I think there was all phases of the population that belonged. They were more or less the dissatisfied people. They didn't like the Democrats, and they didn't like the Republicans. I think it was Teddy Roosevelt who brought about the Progressive Party, and it was revived, I think, around the late 1940s or early 1950s.

The Progressive Party was integrated as much as the Democratic Party was by the blacks. They didn't have much clout in Las Vegas. About the only time they had any advertising or publicity was during an election, and they would have one or 2 people on the ballot. They did not play any part in the political scene of Las Vegas.

*How were politics handled on the Westside? Did anyone control the Westside vote?*

It was the last man to get to the proper authorities with the most money. Very sadly, it was some of the ministers over there



who controlled the politics. This is not a general indictment of the ministry, but it just happened that these people were in politics—some ministers.

Dave Haggard and his wife, Mabel, chose to live on the Westside. They were black. They had a nice home—not as nice as some of those that are over there now, but it was a real comfortable home. I've been in it several times. Mrs. Hoggard was a teacher in the school that was over on the Westside. [Mabel Hoggard began teaching in the Westside School in 1946. She was the first black teacher employed by the Las Vegas Union School District. She also taught at Man Kelly, Highland (now Kermit L. Booker) and Jo Mackey schools. She retired in 1970.—ed.]

Mabel Haggard later was chosen as a Distinguished Nevadan and was honored by the University of Nevada in Las Vegas because she'd contributed so much to the children of the Westside. She and Dave both were very interested in the development of that area. They were fighting many windmills over there, because nobody paid any attention.. I wouldn't say nobody, but very few people, politically, paid any attention to what went on on the Westside. Dave and his wife were quite active in trying to get the blacks recognized in the community, and I think that they succeeded pretty well.

I wasn't especially active in any of their activities on the Westside. All those meetings and things of that sort were taken over by Florence. She knew the Hoggards and a lot of the other people over on the Westside. She knew most of the preachers over there, because she was the southern Nevada representative of Eugenia Claire Smith from Reno, who ran for the Democratic nomination for Congress in 1954. Florence took care of Eugenia's promotion down here in the southern part of the state.

Eugenia had an overall campaign manager who was a friend of mine and a friend of Florence's. He set Florence up as the southern campaign manager for Eugenia Claire. Florence used to come home to talk to me about it. She said she was utterly amazed at what went on over there and the amount of money that passed between this campaign manager of Eugenia Claire Smith's and some of the ministers over there. Both of them told me that. It has been an accepted fact, as far as the people of the city of Las Vegas are concerned, that anytime there is an election on, that it is the last guy with the most money that controls the Westside politically.

The money came from Eugenia. Eugenia Claire Smith was quite wealthy. Her husband was one of the founders of the coffee company. I can't remember the name of it now. [Yuban.-ed.] She was tremendously wealthy; she paid her own way. Where the money went, nobody ever knew, after it was given to the people. Eugenia Claire personally would not give money to the black leaders; her campaign manager would.

*Were there any other instances like that you know about?*

Not that I knew personally about, but there was a saying in the city of Las Vegas that the last guy who you saw over on the Westside and gave money to, you got his vote. That was generally accepted as fact.

*Did that go on in any other part of town?*

Not that I know of.

*In the Democratic Party primary of 1944, which I brought up earlier, the fierce battle was between McCarran and Vail Pittman. The results showed that blacks in Las Vegas had*



*voted for McCarran. From what I can gather, Pittman had expected to get their votes. Do you know how the black vote was delivered to McCarran in that instance?*

No, I don't. McCarran at that time was probably the most powerful politician in the state of Nevada, and he had an organization that was well-oiled. I'm not sure of this, but I think that Bob Moore, who had a feed store and lived over on the Westside, was McCarran's manager over there.

*Some have argued that the black vote that went to McCarran was actually bought. Does that sound believable to you?*

Sure, after hearing what Florence told me of her own personal experience, I would say that it was perfectly possible.

*I've also read that blacks were brought in to Las Vegas to vote.*

At that time there was a pretty rigid control on the voting here. I'll tell you when we get to Mechling and another candidate down here more about this. I don't think that they were voting people who were in the graveyard.

*Regarding the Westside vote, one former city commission member, whose name did not appear with the quote, said, "I can take a few barbecue ribs and some fifths of whiskey and get all the Westside votes that I want."*

That was a statement that was made by somebody who was mouthing off as to his power. I think I know who made the statement. That is one of the things that I can believe because of Florence's experience. The statement is an exaggeration, but it could be done. It's believable.

*Perry Kaufman has written that Las Vegas is the "Mississippi of the West," obviously suggesting that Las Vegas was not an easy place for blacks to prosper, and that they have had to live with attitudes here that are similar to those of the South.*

I don't know when that was written, but the black segregation and being the Mississippi of the West is true in some instances. Now, in the early days, the blacks were accepted; in the middle days—the 1940s—they weren't accepted. The 1940s and 1950s was the worst period for blacks in Las Vegas. That was when the hotels had their ban and the theater had its ban. As far as the general public was concerned, there was no problem, but there were instances that could be pointed out that would make somebody believe that it was the Mississippi of the West. There was not doubt about it, there was segregation here.

*Were living conditions on the Westside unsatisfactory?*

Oh, very definitely! I mean, I wouldn't have wanted to live in one of the houses that they had over there at the time I was active.

*Do you think that for blacks Las Vegas was any worse than any other southwestern city?*

No, it was a general attitude. I know when they had prizefights here, the blacks would be half of your audience. .in football games, basketball games. They weren't segregated that way. The people of the city of Las Vegas accepted them. Certain businessmen would accept them, and some wouldn't. There might have been some Stores where blacks couldn't be served, but I think it was unique if there were.

*In 1951 Ernie Cragin, who was supported for many years by your brother, lost the mayoral election to C. O. Baker. [1951-1959] Do you remember Baker?*

Oh, yes, very well. Baker and I were very good friends. He was a civil engineer and had been here for quite a while. I think he was in the real estate business at that time he was mayor. Baker made a good mayor. He began the progress over on the Westside. He started paving the streets over on the Westside, and putting in sidewalks and doing things that Cragin and his city commission would never do. [Under Mayor Baker, blacktopping of Westside streets began in 1952.—ed.]

*Was your brother upset that Cragin was out of office?*

No. I think he was just as well satisfied with Baker. Al was state commander of the American Legion, and Baker was part of the American Legion, so Al's loyalty was as much to Baker as it was to Cragin. Baker later became one of the leading realtors in the city of Las Vegas. He went into partnership with Hap Hazard, who was our advertising man for quite some time. Mrs. Hazard and Mrs. Cragin both still live here. Mrs. Cragin has a house up at the top of the hill on Charleston. She has the Red Rock movie theaters up on the top of Charleston Hill.

The *Sun* was always in favor of the civil rights business. They claimed to be the defender of the poor, and they played it up pretty good. We played it as strictly news.

George Rudiak was an attorney here who handled most of the civil rights cases that were filed in the district court. For a time there was a rumor around the community

that he was a card-carrying member of the Communists. I don't know that he was, because I never saw his card, but he took most of the cases that were filed by the civil rights people. He was considered the defender of the civil rights people, and most of them were blacks. I don't know what nationality he was, and I don't know where he came from. All of a sudden he started. He came in here around the 1950s, I think. He was around 30 when he came here.

*Do you know whether he worked for the NAACP?*

I think he did. I knew George fairly well, and he talked the red language. It was just sort of general—his whole attitude. Whatever he did for any audience, he usually took the [extreme liberal] line. I didn't pay much attention to it. As far as we were concerned, he was an attorney for the NAACP, and he was not to get any more publicity than any other attorney. I've had some dealings with him. I was in his office 2 or 3 times. We always spoke, said hello as we went down the street. I was never closely associated with him. He was never generally accepted in the city of Las Vegas social circle. Nobody would invite him to their parties. He was sort of a loner. I think he's still practicing.

*In 1953, the local NAACP asked the city commission to pass a civil rights measure. Do you remember that?*

Vaguely. I think Rudiak appeared before the city commission and made his plea. I'm not sure, but we didn't cover it. I think the commission said they'd do something about it, but it never got done for an ordinance. I don't think it was ever passed.

*Howard Cannon, the city attorney, thought there was some problem with the city's authority to do that. Do you recall anything?*

I don't recall it, but if it has been published, I would think probably that it's true. At that time, we had a fairly large staff. We had different people covering different areas. I would see the news, but I don't remember anything that was very startling as far as the Rudiak promotions were concerned.

I think Mayor Oran K. Gragson [1959-1975] had a great deal to do with the change of things over on the Westside. He's from Arkansas. He came in the Boulder Dam days. He's had various interests around the stores; he had a furniture store. I've forgotten what other ones, but he's been here in the political stream for quite some time.

Gragson recognized the situation as it existed over on the Westside, and he was responsible for the federal housing people coming here. He got other federal agencies interested in the Westside, because it really was a ghetto. Gragson convinced the rest of the councilmen that they were entitled to the same benefits as the people on the east side of the tracks.

*Why was he interested in making these changes? Do you know what motivated him?*

I think that he felt that they were human beings, and they were supposed to be treated as human beings, whether they were black, white, green, brown, red or whatever. The previous administrations had made the excuse that there was not enough property over there that would stand an assessment district, so they didn't do anything about it until Gragson came in here and the federal

fund was available. He took advantage of it. There are some very nice houses that were built under the federal government's operation.

*Were there any objections to building federally subsidized housing?*

No. People in the city of Las Vegas thought that it was a good idea to clean up the ghetto.

*I have read that there was a controversy over some of the projects, that some people from a place called Bonanza Village . . .*

Oh, yes. That was a situation where the people of Bonanza Village thought that the blacks were encroaching on their territory. They were real nice places. They weren't large; they weren't very costly, but they were livable. Some of the local residents lived there—the businessmen. There were some of the more educated black people who moved into Bonanza Village: doctors and a couple of lawyers. The whites resented their moving, but they couldn't do anything about it. They went before the planning commission and also the city council and explained the way they thought, that blacks shouldn't be allowed to have places in Bonanza Village. But, under the law, there wasn't anything you could do about it. Some of them were upset enough to move! I know people moved, but I can't tell you names.

The situation just died down. The federal government put more money in, and now they've got places over there that are quite nice. Of course, there were places that the federal government built that all the windows were broken out of. The kids had been playing around in vacant houses. But as a general rule, the houses are quite well kept.



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## SERVICE ON THE UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA BOARD OF REGENTS, 1947-1951

*You ran and were elected to the Board of Regents of the University of Nevada in 1946, taking office in 1947. What made you run for the Board of Regents?*

It was something that nobody paid any attention to. The qualified people wouldn't run for it because it wasn't a paying job. It was a per diem thing. Being a graduate of the school and having my family involved in the educational part of the university, I thought I'd run, see what happened. And I was elected.

*Tell me about your campaign. Did you have to travel around the state?*

I had to go up to Reno for something and I had some cards printed. I took them up and dropped them off at Beatty. . .every place I stopped. I wasn't too interested in spending any money for campaigning. I think the cards cost me \$4.50. Now, people spend \$10,000 to get elected to the regents. Why they do, I don't know, because it's not a paying job. It's a per

diem thing, and you have to travel between here and Reno. It costs you money. If you want to be loyal to the state and the university, you run for regent.

As far as the state is concerned, the Cahlan name is very well known. My brother was editor of the Elko Free Press, and I played baseball in many of the towns that are in the state, so the Cahlan name was known. I don't know whether that had anything to do with it, but I think so.

*Were there any people running against you?*

Yes, I think there were 2 people, but I had never heard their names before.

*Did you have any goals for the university at the time you ran for the Board of Regents?*

Not when I went up there. I didn't know too much about what was going on at the university at that time. I spent probably the first year listening to what had gone on in the

past and what was the present agenda. I had no preconceived ideas of what the operation should be.

Usually it was the job of the regents to provide a policy for the operation of the university. The president was supposed to carry out the policy set by the regents. At least that's the attitude that I took. They would take the president's recommendations and just debate them and either pass them or kill them. Finances were very important. I think that the Board of Regents, ever since they first were sitting in office, were concerned with the finances. There just wasn't enough money. There were things that we wanted to do but we couldn't do, because . . . no money. I remember a central heating project that was on when I first went on the Board of Regents. Apparently it had been talked about for years before I got up there. We never finished talking about it as long as I was on the board, because there just wasn't enough money. And, of course, the salaries for the teachers. . . compared to other universities, they were low.

There were some areas that we would have liked to have taken care of. We did want another dormitory, because Manzanita Hall was an old, old establishment, as was Lincoln Hall. We wanted to get some better facilities for the students, but were unable to because we didn't have enough money.

John Moseley was president of the university when I went up there. John was a very good educator. He was interested in providing the university with the things that it needed. However, he was unable to take orders. In that era, there were 2 or 3 budgets that were presented to the legislature. The legislature got a little tired of seeing 3 budgets come up there. They couldn't tell which one was the right one. The Board of Regents would have one; John Moseley would have another; Charlie Gorman, the comptroller, would

have another. They'd somehow get into the legislators' hands.

The second year I was up there we decided that there would be one budget presented by the chairman of the Board of Regents—Si Ross. I got a telephone call from Carson City from one of the legislators. He told me that John Moseley was up there handing out pamphlets on something. I've forgotten what it was, but he had been instructed to stay out of Carson City. We had called Moseley and Charlie Gorman in and told them that there was going to be one budget, and that would be it. And John Moseley appeared before the legislators. He didn't appear at any hearings at that time, but he just got his nose where it shouldn't've been.

*Were there things on his budget that differed from the budget submitted by the Board of Regents?*

All 3 of them differed. They were small items. The thing that we tried to do was to get on a good standing with the legislators, because this had been going on, apparently, for several years before I got there. The legislators just weren't interested in going over 3 budgets. They wanted one budget which, naturally, should have been presented to them. When they got the 3, they kept getting angrier and angrier. The legislators didn't know which budget was the proper budget.

When I heard that Moseley had been up to the legislature in violation of the statements that the Board of Regents made, I told Si Ross that I wanted to discuss that in the next Board of Regents meeting. So at the next Board of Regents meeting we called Moseley in, Gorman also. Moseley said he didn't understand the fact that we had told him to stay away from the legislature. I had him read back the minutes of the meeting when we had



told him that. I said, "You just violated our confidence in you, so we would appreciate your . . . » I made a motion to the chairman of the board that we accept his resignation.

*Was Moseley upset or concerned about the idea of presenting one budget?*

No, at the time he was perfectly satisfied with it. And when I heard that he was up there at the legislature, I knew that he was not there for any other purpose than to push his budget.

*When you confronted him, did he admit to having been talking specifically about the budget?*

Yes. Not before any hearing. He'd talked to people in the hall.

*You moved for his resignation. Was that carried?*

Yes. We had a lot of pressure put on us when it was noticed in the newspapers that probably Moseley and Gorman would resign. The night before the meeting where we were to discuss these "resignations," a group from the Masonic Lodge came up and informally discussed this thing, because Gorman was a very high man in the Masonic Lodge. (I don't know whether Moseley was a Mason or not.) Anyway, there was a lot of pressure put on us.

Gorman had not been involved in the legislative budget stuff—I mean the talk. His problem was that we had told him that we wanted the athletic bill at the dining hall, which was quite sizable, taken care of. The Boosters were told to pay up. As I remember, the bill was \$10,000. The second year that I was up there it hadn't changed. It had gone up, in fact. We told Moseley and Gorman that that debt had to be paid before they could give

them any more. That wasn't done. Of course, I can see the pressure that was put on Moseley and Gorman, because the Boosters . . . well, it was much like the ones down here that caused all the trouble. The Athletic Department just didn't have the money. So at a general meeting of the Board of Regents and the Boosters Club and anybody else who was interested, we decided that Moseley would be eliminated immediately and that Gorman would be given a year's notice.

I think that the last audit of the funds up there showed that the Boosters Club owed \$40,000 for the athletes who were taken care of. That was when they were going big time and were playing a lot of the big universities and away games. They were getting guarantees that they would pay for their travel and all of that sort of thing. Those were the years of the university building a football team which was ranked in the top 20. They played in a bowl game in San Diego—I think it was the Salad Bowl. It was just costing too much money. When it came to any local games, there were only . . . Well, the Mackay Stadium held 5,000 people, and never were there more than 1,200 or 1,500. The downtown people apparently were not accepting the university program. Only those vitally interested attended games. The university would have to guarantee the visiting teams so much money, or they couldn't be scheduled.

You didn't get any tuition from any of the football players who were recruited, as it is now. The coach cost a lot of money, because they had Jim Aiken, who was quite well known in the East. They brought him in, and he was recruiting left and right, and we lost those scholarships. The thing of it was that I didn't think that the tail should wag the dog. Everybody around Reno and around that area wanted big time football, but they wouldn't support it. You can't play big colleges—Tulsa

and Houston at that time were powers in football—you can't play those kinds of people with only 1,200 people going to the football game. It just didn't make sense! But they were very, very agitated when the thing was brought out into the open.

This was a small state, and everybody knew everybody else. The legislators were the ones who had the final say. You had to make friends with them before you could get any money. I decided, despite the fact that I was vitally interested in the football schedule, that the dining hall bill would have to be paid. At the time Joe Sheeketski, who was the coach of the football team, wanted some revisions made at the football field at the Mackay Stadium. It was I who pushed that. This was before football was discontinued.

It was very interesting that the next time that I ran for regent, I was defeated very badly because of the squabble we had over the president and over the deadly athletic department. There wasn't any doubt about it; I accepted it as such. I also made the motion for dropping football. It was very unpopular, and they blamed it all on me. It is very strange that about 2 months after the new board took office, they did the same thing that I had moved to do and they dropped big time football. So I guess I wasn't 100 percent wrong! If they had continued the way they were going, they'd've run up a tremendous debt; we'd be unable to pay it.

*Were you involved in hiring the next university president?*

Yes. His name was Malcolm Love. We had interviewed 3 people. We had a list and worked it down to 3 people, and Love was among the 3. It happened that I came down on the plane from Reno with one of the other people who we interviewed. He started in to

talk to me. His ideas were very, very far to the left. I can't give you any special . . . just his general talk.

*Was he speaking about politics, economics . . . ?*

Oh, a little bit of everything. I saw him and knew who he was, and he sat down beside me. I started to question him about a lot of things. The next time that we met to discuss the presidency, I told my other colleagues that I would never go for this man because of his ideas. He wasn't the man for the job in my opinion. I've forgotten who the other man was. I was going to say he dropped out, but I don't think he did. Love appeared before the regents on the final interview. In my estimation he was so far above the other contestants that I told them that I thought he was the man.

I think Love came from Colorado. His entrance into the race was started by Jack Conlon. Jack Conlon was the executive secretary of one of the senators—I've forgotten which one; it wasn't McCarran. He told me to talk to this man. He was going to put in his resume, and we were to look it over. I was able to convince a couple of other people on the board that he was the man, and we hired him.

*What kinds of things did he tell you that convinced you that he was the man for the University of Nevada?*

It was his general appearance. He looked like a college president. He told the board of his work at . . . I think it was Colorado State that he came from. His experience and his ideas were what I thought the university needed. He had been overseeing many of the classes at the university where he came from.

Love had come into my office. He made a trip out here, and he came into my office. He

and I sat down and talked for maybe a couple of hours. I asked him the same questions that I had asked this other man. He gave me some ideas that I thought that he would be a good president. When we got into the board meeting, I took the lead in asking him questions, and I thought I was bringing out his ideas and his thoughts. His appearance was such that . . . I know I shouldn't have judged him by his appearance, because he could appear that way for the one meeting and then change. There was something inside of me that told me that yes, he was the man. He thought that the university had potential in that the Mackay School of Mines was known all over the United States as one of the best. He wanted to bring the others up to that level. His attitude in building the university certainly was along the same line that I had. We hired him, but his wife was not too enthused about living in Reno.

*Would you ask him questions on national political issues, that kind of thing?*

No, it was all what the university could do or what he could do for the university and the state of Nevada. I wasn't interested at all in his political opinions. It was something of the fact that if he wasn't a Nevada man, he'd soon become a Nevada man and do a job for the university.

*Did you have some misgivings about bringing in an outsider?*

No. There weren't any local people who applied for the job. If there were any misgivings, Love certainly stifled them. After he was chosen, we had a dinner party for all the regents and Love and Mrs. Love. They had a daughter who was also quite involved in the family. It was sort of: is the family acceptable

to the people of the state of Nevada? I figured that the man who headed the university had to be interested in the background and the operation—the situation of the state of Nevada. We talked financial ideas, and his ideas fit in with mine. He didn't want to put a budget in that was padded or anything of that sort. He would do his best to see that the university progressed with the money that they had.

Money was quite a thing. It was something that was in the background of everything we did at the university, because the legislators were not very impressed with the university. It had been the orphan child of the legislators for many years. It was always the last budget to be approved. Whatever money they had left they'd give it to the university.

*Did you try to encourage increased funding? Did you try to get the university higher on the list of priorities, or did you figure that you had to work with the legislature the way it was?*

We talked to individuals. I didn't interfere with any of the program that Si Ross had as far as the budget was concerned. I did talk to some of the individual members and pointed out to them the need for a budget increase. I don't know that we got it then. That is one reason why I was opposed to the establishment of the university down here in Las Vegas. I was violently opposed, because I knew in my own mind that under the circumstances that existed we couldn't afford 2 universities. We weren't getting enough from the legislature to operate one properly!

*What other kinds of problems did Love face?*

He had this football problem.

*How did he handle that?*

He didn't handle it; I did. I was the one who could see that if it was left the way it was, it was going to grow into a tremendous amount of money, and we just wouldn't be able to afford it.

I'm not sure that this happened in the 1950s, but it led up to a lot of things that happened afterwards. Doug Dashiell, who coached football down here at Las Vegas High School, was appointed football coach at the university, much through my insistence. I would write columns that Doug was more than a high school coach, and the university could do quite a job by hiring him. I don't know whether Doug's hiring was a result of my columns, but I always thought that it was. He went up there to coach football at the university, and they had a fairly good team. They held Oregon, I think, to a tie. But the kids who were playing football didn't like him too much and they struck. They got it smoothed out before the next game.

The players just didn't like their coach, and they wanted to get rid of him. I wasn't up there at the time, but I think one of the things that caused them some concern was the fact that the first thing that Doug did was to join some actors' company and did appear in one show. The kids at the university didn't think that the football coach should be an actor or in the theater. That was the underlying deal. What else happened on the football field. I'm not sure. I think that it was just the fact that they didn't think Dashiell knew what he was doing on the football field. I didn't think that it was proper, and I don't think it's proper now for any university organization to strike because they don't like somebody.

*What about other issues? Were there professors who were involved with political problems, or . . . ?*

Not that I knew of. One of the university agricultural deans—he wasn't a dean of the university; he was an agricultural advisor—had some federal job. His name was Cecil Creel and he ran for office. Jim Scrugham was the dean of the engineering school for some time, but I think he had left the university when he ran for and was elected governor of the state. There was no political unrest as far as the professors were concerned. It was more or less of a town and gown situation, where the university was separated from the rest of the town as far as political things were concerned.

*Was the honorary board of regents one of your ideas?*

No, it wasn't my idea. The legislators figured that if they had a watchdog on the regents that it would be a much better deal. So they passed a bill that they would have an advisory board. [In 1947 the Nevada legislature passed an act creating an advisory board of regents of prominent citizens to be appointed by the governor and to act in an advisory capacity to the elected Board of Regents of the University of Nevada. This act was repealed in 1953.—ed.] I think it was 10 people that they were supposed to have. We thought that we didn't want somebody looking over our shoulders at everything we did—not that there was any secret about it, because our meetings were always open with the press or whoever wanted to come in. If the honorary board had ideas that were not acceptable to us, we had a battle. It would have been worse than anything that could have been done. They set it up, but the advisory board was not active. The legislature, in its wisdom, found out in the 2 years that they were not in session that the advisory board

was not what it was cracked up to be. So they repealed the law.

*Why was Si Ross, the chairman of the Board of Regents, opposed by George Wingfield?*

I think I do know. George Wingfield wanted to give the university \$100,000. The Board of Regents said that the money was tainted, because it came from Wingfield, who was a gambler. And his reputation as far as the feminine part of the area around Reno was not very good. As a result, Wingfield blamed Si Ross, who was chairman of the board, for the action of not accepting the \$100,000. The first meeting that I attended up there, I walked in the Riverside Hotel where I was staying. George Wingfield was sitting right alongside the door. As I went in, I stopped to say hello to him and tell him who I was. The first thing that he said is, 'if you are a member of the Board of Regents, when are you going to get rid of that S.O.B., Si Ross?' So that's how delicate the thing was.

*Why did Wingfield have a bad reputation among the women of the area?*

He came from Tonopah and had some associates who the women thought were not acceptable as part of the university organization.

Malcolm Love stayed here about 2 years. His wife didn't like it here. I think that rather than end his marriage, he better find a new job. I think it was she who made all the . . . because he didn't have any problems. He overcame a great many problems that erupted at the university. I think he just got sick and tired of trying to operate a university on the amount of money that they got from the legislature. He never told me his reasons. He

wrote me a letter and told me he was going to resign. I tried to convince him not to, and he didn't give me any idea of what caused it. He just said, "Well, there are too many problems here that I feel are insoluble." He was offered a job at San Diego State and was president down there. He finally resigned that job and retired.

*I have read in Fred Anderson's oral history that he felt it was the budget, the size of the student body, limited goals of the university and what he called the "provincial outlook" of the legislature.*

He hit it right on the nose. There were problems up there that Love didn't think he could solve if he stayed there all his life.

*What were his contributions in those 2 years?*

I can't tell you, because I was defeated for the board just after that.

*I ran across an interesting letter in your papers at the museum. It was a reply to a letter that you had written to Malcolm Love. You had inquired about an academic position yourself. Do you remember that?*

That was about the time that we were having internal problems at the Review-Journal. An interest was shown by Don Reynolds in buying the newspaper. I wrote Eva Adams, who was the executive secretary of Senator McCarran, and got a government form to fill out. I never filled it out, but I was thinking that way.

*To take a government job?*

Any job that'd pay. I didn't go any further.



*Who replaced Love . . . Minard W. Stout?*

Yes. I didn't have anything to do with him, although I followed his future and saw that there was not much chance of him succeeding, because he was very pompous. The students didn't like him, and you know how students can affect the operation of a university. I don't know exactly what happened up there, but I do know that there were editorials run in the *Gazette* and the *Journal* and the *Sagebrush*, which was the campus newspaper, that were not favorable to Stout.

*The last year for statewide elections for the Board of Regents was 1956. Why did that change?*

That had been bounced around for years. The legislature at one time had the regents' terms set up as 10 years, and then they wanted to have them appointed. They had them appointed, and they weren't satisfied, and they had them elected again. It was the legislature that bounced that ball all over the court. Then they went along with the other movement that the legislature had of setting up different districts. The Board of Regents was set up so that Las Vegas and Reno had the greatest number, and the cow counties had the others.

*I gather from what you've told me that the Board of Regents has become more political since your service on that body.*

Oh, very definitely. You have people who use the Board of Regents as a stepping-stone to greater glory. Grant Sawyer was a member of the Board of Regents when he was elected governor. Frankie Sue Del Papa used her Board of Regents experience to get elected secretary of state.

*Is the Board of Regents too politicized in Nevada?*

I don't know how they're operating now. I don't think they were politicized overly, but there were some people who used it as a stepping-stone to other offices.

*Do you think that's an appropriate use of that office?*

I'd have to think about that question, because sometimes it does good, and sometimes it doesn't. I think that the people who are members of the Board of Regents now are people who are interested in the future of the 2 universities. I guess Chris Karamanos ran for some office—assembly or someplace like that. And there have been many people on the board who have used it as a springboard. But as far as the actual operation inside the Board of Regents, I don't think that makes too much difference. I think they're pretty well involved in trying to make these 2 universities the best that they can.

You've got the situation now where when one school gets one thing, the other school wants it. The Thomas and Mack Center down here, I think, was financed to a degree by the Board at Regents. When they had the Thomas and Mack pavilion down here, Reno wanted similar treatment. Now this engineering school down here at UNLV . . . They approved the engineering school, but then the university in Reno wanted an upgrade of their engineering school. It's a kind of a north-south battle again, and that's too bad. It's tragic that you've got that north-south battle going. It hurts the taxpayers.

The thing that you have to understand is the fact that the north and the south have been fighting for years over who should control the state of Nevada. As a result, that



battle has carried on into the legislature. You've got the Reno delegation up there, and you've got the cow counties, and Clark County is sort of a stepchild—or has been in the past. There's some of that that carries over now, because you get north-south debates up there every once in a while. Any institution that has 2 legs is involved in that fight, and it's only hurting the institutions. It's not hurting anybody else.

*Do you think it would be a good idea to have an appointed Board of Regents?*

They tried that, and it doesn't work. It didn't work. You had the same deal. You'd get the Board of Regents set up so that the north or the south was in power, and it just didn't work.

I thought at the time I was on the board, and I still think, that the Board of Regents should take more interest in what's going on. I can recall we would always accept the president's recommendations if we didn't know anything about it. He's supposed to be the boss man up at the university. I felt that we were to set up the policies and instruct the president and whoever else was there in power, that this is the policy that you abide by. Of course, here again, the university at that time was in Reno, and anybody who was elected from down here didn't know what was going on. As I recall it, there were never any of the minutes sent out to the various people on the board. In Reno they could go up to the university and read the minutes themselves. We were somewhat in the dark as to the operation. We had to rely on the president.

*Could you clarify the way you see the relationship between the president and the Board of Regents?*

He's appointed by the Board of Regents, and he can be fired by the Board of Regents. If he is breaking policy, then we should come into the picture. As far as the daily operation of the university, the board should have no authority over that. The president is the one who should see that the university abides by the policy of the board.

*Are you concerned that the president's independence might be compromised in some circumstances?*

It could always be compromised. There often is a difference of opinion between a policy that's set up and how the president interprets it.

*If the president of the university, for example, disagrees with a policy of the board, how should he handle that?*

He should come before the Board of Regents and outline his opposition or support or whatever. He would report directly to the Board of Regents.

*You think it would not be appropriate for him to speak publicly on a disagreement?*

No! He'd be in the same situation as Reagan is in now with his cabinet. The members of the cabinet are saying things that are against Reagan's policy. If I was the president at this time, I'd fire any of those people. If they don't want to work under the policy and the rules and regulations set up by whatever board it is, then they don't deserve to have the job.



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## ORGANIZED LABOR AND CLARK COUNTY POLITICS, 1940S-1950S

*When the large number of laborers came to work at BMI, it obviously changed the whole labor situation in the area. Do you know how active the AF of L was at BMI?*

I can't tell you whether it was the AF of L or the O10. It was one of them that was quite active. I think that the O10 came out and may have been the reason for this Fair Employment outfit coming in here. That may have been the underlying problem.

*There was an election at BMI in which the O10 was victorious, but the O10 was never recognized as the bargaining agent for the workers.*

I recall that they had an election and that the O10 was not recognized, but the internal problems I didn't know. Perhaps Al did, but it was never carried down to me. I was almost isolated from the news gathering. I read the stories that were written, of course. Naturally, being the editor I edited their stories. I read them and forgot them.

*Was anyone from your paper assigned to cover O10 news?*

I think that Cohn McKinley had that beat. It wasn't specific; he had other things to cover for the newspaper. We weren't especially interested in promoting the O10. We were more interested in the advance of the community than we were in any specific things that happened. Only if they had a strike or something of that sort would we be interested in news about organized labor.

There were quite a few people who were familiar with the railroad strike of 1922 and were interested in the unions, because they figured if the unions got that strong, they could shut down the town. I don't recall that there was much concern about the International Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers Union; it was more concern about the union activity itself and other unions coming in here.

*That union opposed McCarran in 1944. That would have been some cause for concern, I would think.*

Well, at that time, it is my recollection that the union didn't have too much juice in the political field down here, and McCarran had no trouble in being reelected. The union at that time was a small segment of the population down here, I think that this was the start of the organization of the labor people in Clark County. The 010 was very active in recruiting people into their organization, which had some very serious implications for the local Democratic party. You see, early in the history of Las Vegas, the only union people that we had were on the railroad. Las Vegas was a railroad town, so the citizens of Las Vegas took the labor movement in stride. They felt that as long as they were working on the railroad, that's fine. But this was spreading during the Basic Magnesium Plant operation, and the labor unions came in here, and they did for some time control the Democratic party.

Ed Clark and Al Cahlan in the original wing of the Democratic party tried to work with the labor people. For quite a while they got along pretty well. But there were 2 people in the labor unions who you couldn't convince or bring into the main line: Tom Hanley and Ralph Alsup. I think that Hanley was with the pipefitters, and Alsup. ..I'm not sure. [Ralph Alsup was president of the Clark County Central Labor Council.—ed.] They controlled quite a bit of the labor organization. They were riding high here for quite some time, because the leadership of the old-line Democrats couldn't deal with these people. A lot of them just dropped out of the political field, because of the tactics that were used by these 2 men, and they got the union people to run it.

*What kind of tactics were used?*

Oh, underhanded stuff. I don't know that it was ever proved, but bribery. Hanley

later was convicted of killing the culinary workers union leader during a fight they had down here among the culinary workers. [Tom Hanley, a labor organizer, and his son Gramby were convicted of murdering Las Vegas Culinary Union leader Elmer (Al) Bramlett in 1977. Tom Hanley died in prison.—ed.] Alsup and Hanley had henchmen who were in the other leading labor unions. They had a pretty good grip on the city of Las Vegas. [In 1949, Ralph Alsup shot Ray Folsom during a dispute at the Labor hall above the Boulder Club. Mr. Folsom survived, and in 1951 Alsup was sentenced to 1 to 2 years in prison for assault.—ed.] The organization of these labor unions and the hold that they had on the city, for that matter, brought about the passage of the right-to-work bill. [In 1952 an initiative petition calling for a right-to-work law was narrowly passed by the voters.—ed.] It was just the things that these people were doing were piled one on top of the other, and finally it got to a point where something had to be done. The labor unions got to a point where they could dump all the officers of the Democratic party and put their henchmen in. They were not necessarily members of the union, but people who they thought were best for them; not for anybody else, but for them.

*I found evidence of this problem in the 1944 election. Let me read to you what one scholar has written. "In early June, 1944, opponents of McCarran who had worked diligently and organized on the precinct level, took control of the Clark County Democratic convention. McCarran's allies—the Ed Clark, Al Cahlan, Archie Grant combine—were overconfident and surprised by the extent of the opposition to McCarran. They lost badly. This convention enthusiastically endorsed a*

*fourth term for President Roosevelt but refused to endorse McCarran.” [Jerome E. Edwards, *Pat McCarran: Political Boss of Nevada* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1982), p. 113.] Your brother’s group took some losses.*

They not only took losses, they took bad losses. That was, I think, about the time that the labor unions took over the Democratic party here. I think that this development brought about the organization of a right-to-work party faction in the Democratic organization.

*The Clark County Democratic convention of 1944 did not give McCarran the endorsement. Do you know who their candidate was, or whether they had one?*

I’m not exactly sure. There was a time in there when Tom Mechling arrived in the city of Las Vegas, and he broke the Democratic party. He just shattered it. He ran for United States Senator against Alan Bible in 1952. This was all tied in together. It pretty near blew the Democratic party into smithereens.

*This episode suggests contradictions and problems. You wanted Las Vegas to grow; you even had some hopes of perpetuating BMI after the war. If industrial workers came here, that would lead almost inevitably to conflicts.*

Of course, your hometown people here wanted to see Las Vegas grow but they wanted to control the growth of Las Vegas. When they lost control of the Democratic party here, they practically lost control of the community. There were a lot of things that happened during that time, and I can’t quite piece them together in my own mind as to when they happened, but it was all involved in this battle between the unions and the other people.

*Do you think it was possible to control growth—control the types of industry and the types of people who came here?*

No, I don’t think that you could control anything like that when you are growing, because you’ve got so many people who come in here who don’t know anything about the situation, nothing about the history of the community that they’re going into. They read newspapers and see that the unions are controlling a community, and they naturally say, “Well, what’s wrong with that?”

I used to be able to go down the political ballot and know everybody who was on the ballot. Now I only know 3 or 4 people. A new class of people are now in control, I would say, of the community—people like Parry Thomas. He was one of the leaders—not that he was a union man or anything else. He was one of the people who came in here and developed the community, or helped develop the community, and took over the power from people like Ed Clark, Al Cahlan, Jim Cashman and those kinds that had ruled for so long.

*Did your brother sense that his power was being challenged, that he might lose some power in this situation?*

Well, of course, his loss of power came when he was overlooked for the appointment to Pittman’s place in the United States Senate. His power practically ceased at that time.

*Did Al lose power locally?*

He became disinterested, let’s say. He wasn’t as avid a Democrat as he was prior to that time. I can see why, because the Democratic party kicked him in the pants, and that was it.

*In 1952 Nevada passed a right-to-work law by public referendum. Do you recall the circumstances surrounding that?*

Yes. It was a situation where the labor unions were getting too great a hold on the state as a whole. They were controlling elections, and they were controlling things from the city council clear up to the state legislature. The leaders down here got rather sick of having a strike every week or month or whatever. They decided that they would get the right-to-work bill set up. There was a very, very bad reaction from the labor unions. They were fighting one side, and leaders of the state got on the other side. They finally got enough votes to pass the bill. It was purely a bill against the unions.

The *Review-Journal* was for the right-to-work bill. The *Sun* had always been a labor paper. The fact of the matter is, it was founded by the linotype operators union. I am sure that they took the side of the workers. I don't recall exactly, but I think they were for the labor unions.

*Labor made 2 efforts to repeal that law—one in 1954 and again in 1956. Why were they unsuccessful in their attempt?*

It was their own fault. They were in control. They wanted to control the state of Nevada the same way they controlled their union lodges or whatever they call them. They just couldn't beat the other citizens of the state, because the unions were striking all over the state of Nevada—mostly here and in Reno—and the citizens just got tired of it. The recent culinary workers strikes are a return to the way it was just before the right-to-work bill passed.

I don't believe that the local Democratic party took an official stand on right-to-work.

They took an unofficial stand, which was that each man should do the best he could to see that the legislators were voting the right way—the way they wanted them to. I don't know of any particular incident, but there was quite a drive down here for the right-to-work bill, because practically every merchant in town had been affected by a strike or a picket line, and they just got fed up.

I don't believe that Jim Cashman was struck. He may have had pickets; I don't recall. But anyway, there was a strike on. I've forgotten whether Jim had a picket line around his place or not. He used to serve the pickets lunch. He had a jackass and a couple of monkeys and 2 or 3 other animals around there walking along or around where the pickets were. As far as I know, it was Jim's idea. They had them parading back and forth with the pickets—not Jim himself; he had some of his employees doing it. It became more or less of a joke as far as the community was concerned. If he did have a picket line, it drove them away. We got out and got pictures of the animals out there in front with the pickets. And as I say, the pickets were there about 2 weeks, I guess, and then they disappeared.

*Did you print these pictures in the paper?*

Oh, sure. They should be on some of my papers that they have out at the historical society museum.

*Do you think Cashman was a pretty fair representative of local attitudes?*

Oh, yes. He was the leader. He wanted the right-to-work bill passed. He was very opposed to the governor's veto, and did everything he could to see that it was overridden. Others didn't go as far as he did,



but the feeling of the people of the community was behind Jim.

*How did the state and local Democratic party reconcile right-to-work with the national image of the Democratic party as the party of organized labor?*

Las Vegas is somewhat of a unique town in that they believed that they should be able to control their own business houses and whatever they owned. I think that the Democrats decided not to take any stand in the right-to-work bill battle. There were battles that almost came to fisticuffs in the county conventions, which came as a result of the fight over the right-to-work bill. Labor had almost controlled the Clark County convention, but they didn't get enough control. Of course, Cashman was a Democrat, my brother was, so was Cliff Jones. They were Democrats, and yet they were for the right-to-work bill.

*Were they active at these conventions?*

Yes, very active. We ran editorials on the right-to-work bill, and the others were trying to get votes to beat the right-to-work bill. For maybe 10 years it was a battle all the way.

*Do you remember who wrote those editorials on right-to-work?*

I think Al did. I don't remember writing any right now; I can't recall that I wrote any of those, so I guess it was Al.

*What have been the consequences of the right-to-work bill?*

I don't know anything about what the effect was up in northern Nevada, but I know

that it eased the strike pickets for a while. However, in the aftermath of all this political stuff on the right-to-work bill, the leaders just didn't seem to want to use it as a weapon. The supporters of the right-to-work bill thought they weren't getting a square deal, because at that time there was a real organized labor movement throughout the United States. They were controlling everything. We were not the only state in the union that passed this right-to-work bill. I've forgotten how many there were, but there were a great many of the western states that were more or less states' rights supporters. This right-to-work bill fit right in with the rights that were guaranteed by the Constitution. So there was a real drive in the western part of the United States and some in the Middle West, although the Middle West is farming country, and they weren't affected too much by it. But I think that the people who believed in states' rights believed in the right-to-work bill.

The people of the state of Nevada were rejoicing because they passed the right-to-work bill. As far as the right-to-work bill down here in Las Vegas was concerned, it shut off a lot of the labor difficulties that they had for a time. You've got issues right now that develop into or could develop into strikes by these various unions. The local leaders didn't seem to want to use that right-to-work bill in their negotiations with the unions.

People who would like to come to the state look at all the advantages that the state can offer. If they can offer them the right-to-work bill, they might want to come to the community much more.

When I was with the Southern Nevada Industrial Foundation we negotiated with several companies, and that was one of the things that they were interested in. They didn't fail to come to the state of Nevada because of any of the laws we had. The other

states that were competing against us for these businesses had more to offer, like the university and education and rents. But they were very impressed when we said we had a right-to-work bill. I don't remember any business that came in here just because of the right-to-work bill. There were other factors that were involved. The right-to-work bill was just one of the things that we could offer..

Organized labor uses a strike as an implement. Unions wouldn't be interested in having non-union people come in here, and there were some battles over that. The leaders of the unions wanted to know whether the people who we were trying to bring in here were anti-labor. The people who were coming in here looking at Las Vegas as a place for moving their offices to were impressed with the fact that the right-to-work bill was in operation in the state of Nevada. The labor unions certainly didn't want that issue given any great amount of faith as far as the people coming in here were concerned. Labor unions were opposed to people coming in here who were anti-union.

I think that labor all over the United States has lost a great deal of power. There are a lot of unions that have lost a great deal of membership. You've got to remember that under Roosevelt the unions were almost in control, because their power stemmed from the White House on down to the smallest courthouse. Roosevelt and Truman were both labor lovers, and after they got out of office, the unions started in to lose whatever power they had because it didn't come from the White House any more.

As far as Las Vegas was concerned, I think that the unions have lost membership here over the years. I think that the labor unions are going down toward oblivion, because the only people who seem to have any strength

in the city of Las Vegas are the culinary workers. They are powerful because they've got such a large membership. Take the last 2 strikes, for instance. Everybody was real happy about striking. You'd go out and see the people there waving their picket placards and yelling, "We'll win!" And on each occasion they didn't win anything; they just lost a lot of wages. I think that that is something that is happening all over the United States, because the power isn't in the White House any more, and it used to be.

However, I don't see how you can get along without having organized labor. Labor certainly has a right to protest, but the methods that they have used in the past haven't been those of American citizens. If they would realize that their pay is coming from the jobs that they have and that the people who are running the places where they are working certainly are entitled to a profit. .but many of these unions just don't care for that stuff. They don't care how much money the firm is making or whether it's floundering. If the labor unions took a different tack of sitting down and negotiating and putting the top labor people in a position that they lose their pay, just like the rank and file does . . . . If you had any bargaining, it'd be real rapid, because you cut off the salaries of the guys who are in the leadership of the unions. They'd be affected just the same as the peons are.

Labor now is getting a larger percentage of the firms' profits than they ever did before, because they've got all these benefits that they have. They're never satisfied with the contract that they have over a period of 4 or 5 years. They figure that they are entitled to more money just because they're a labor union. If labor would not be so adamant as far as their requests are concerned, I don't think that they'd have any problem. But they always

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go in with an idea that they're going to get 10 percent wage relief; they're going to get their dental work, going to get their medical stuff on Medicaid and other things. They just added so much onto the backs of the firms that are hiring them that it's just a shame, as far as I'm concerned.



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## PROMOTING LAS VEGAS IN THE 1940S AND 1950S

*It's very apparent that the 1940s was a critical time for the economic development of Las Vegas. Was there any significant change in the Las Vegas power structure during the 1940s?*

Yes, there was. You had people like Bill Moore coming into the community; you had people like Maxwell Kelch; you had John Kell Houssels. I think Houssels was from California; I'm not sure. Those types of people became members of the Chamber of Commerce and, through the Chamber of Commerce, ruled in positions that they occupied as the power structure. As a rule, the advancement was of the better type person rather than the gangster-active people who were on the Strip at that time. At that time—in the 1940s—there was quite a lot of the mob that was in the hotels out there.

*Did the mob not want to get inside this group, or did the group not accept them?*

I'll tell you a story that will answer your question. I think that it was Bugsy Siegel, but

I'm not sure. Moe Sedway wanted to run for city commission and Bugsy called him into his office and said, "Look, we don't occupy city commissions; we control city commissions." So that was the theory that developed between the mob and the community.

*Did Siegel control the city commission?*

I would say that while he did not control . . . or while they did not control the city commission, they had a great deal to say about a lot of things that happened. I would not by any stretch of the imagination say that Las Vegas was a little Chicago, as far as politics were concerned, because the Strip stayed out of politics entirely.

*Can you give me any examples of situations where the Strip actually exercised power and influence?*

The building of the Flamingo Hotel is one, and I think I've covered that. The development of Winchester and the other town that they've

got out there . . . Paradise, was completely a Strip undertaking. [Upon further questioning Mr. Cahlan says he is referring to mob front men who, for tax purposes, did not want certain property brought within the city limits.—ed.]

*You told me that some of these new people were quite readily accepted, became powerful, influential members of the community. What happened to Ed Clark, who was an old-timer?*

Ed died in 1946. I would say he was in his seventies, maybe his eighties, when he died. He had faded out of the picture pretty generally in the forties. His slide had started. He had resigned as national committeeman, and my brother was appointed the Democratic national committeeman. My brother was quite active in politics and in civic promotion.

*Newcomers didn't gravitate to Ed Clark as a power magnet?*

No, they just seemed to develop into their own niches in the community. They'd get into politics . . .

In the Republican community, I would guess that probably Harold Stocker, who was an old-timer here, inherited whatever leadership they had in the Republican party. Ed Converse, who developed the Bonanza Airlines between here and Reno, became the Republican national committeeman. So there were people who came in from the outside sometimes, and sometimes it was the local people who still remained in power. As far as the Cashman family was concerned, the Cashman family still exerts a great deal of power in the community. You've got people like Parry Thomas who came in

here with the bank, and he developed some power structure.

*Was there anyone who became as powerful as Ed Clark had been?*

I would say no. The only person who I would compare Ed Clark to is Parry Thomas, because Parry came in here with the Valley Bank. Parry was from a Salt Lake family. I believe he was a Mormon. I never did ask him his religion or know of his religion. He graduated from the University of Utah and was in the banking business up there. It wasn't the Valley Bank to start with. But he came in here, and he was considered quite powerful as far as the community was concerned—the development of the community. He had the Teamsters invest a lot of money in the hotels. He was in other development-housing stuff. He was a liberal banker. Until he came in, it was very, very hard to get any large development loans from Ed Clark and the Bank of America, which later took over the First State Bank. Parry Thomas expanded the lending power of the community tremendously. At least a lot of these hotels would not have been built had it not been for Parry Thomas.

*Did he become active in the Democratic party?*

Not too. He didn't delve in politics. He was satisfied with developing the community. He was a banker. I think he joined the Chamber of Commerce. He never held an office in the Chamber of Commerce that I know of. You could say he was the financial leader of southern Nevada.

That was about the time that Nellis Air Force came in here, in the 1940s, and Basic Magnesium, Incorporated. The community



was changing along with the leadership. It was completely changed, of course. I don't think it was changed for the better or for the worse. I think that it just carried on.

The unions were running politics here in the forties, and there were a lot of union people who tried to grab the power that didn't have the opportunity.

*They were active in the Democratic party?*

Yes.

*Did the Republican party make any headway? You told me Las Vegas was a Democratic town.*

It was, and it still is for that matter, although the Republicans now are in charge back in Washington. There wasn't too much politics in the 1940s, because we were still fighting the war, and politics came second. And I don't remember any great political upheaval during the forties. It was just more or less dormant.

My brother's power increased through the American Legion, because he became state commander of the American Legion in the 1940s. That was quite a political figure in the community, and they had a great deal of the say about politics. Al did exert quite a great deal of power in politics.

Al was terribly treated by a Democratic governor. I think that when Governor Carville did what he did to him, Al lost all interest in politics. [Mr. Cahlan is referring to Governor E. P. Carville's failure to appoint Al Cahlan to the United States Senate upon Senator Key Pittman's death in office in 1940.-ed.] Later he ran for county commissioner and was defeated. Bill Moore was one of the younger Turks who was coming up, and Bill

beat him. The 2 incidents put together kind of soured him on politics. My brother never lost his interest in politics, but he kind of faded out of the picture. He was more or less the man behind the scenes. He suggested the people who should hold these offices. The leaders of the party would consult him. He did exert power, but how much I wouldn't be able to value. Al was semi-active, let's say. He devoted most of his time after that to the newspaper.

About at the end of the war in Germany, it was rumored that BMI was going to close. The fact of the matter is, they stopped making magnesium before the war ended. [BMI was constructed in late 1941 and ceased operation in November, 1944.-ed.]

*Was that a very big disappointment to people in town?*

Oh, yes. Definitely, because here was something that was out there that had employed 2,000 people. All of a sudden their jobs were gone.

*BMI wound down, the war ultimately came to an end, and the gunnery school was fading out of the scene. Did Las Vegas lose a lot of people at that point?*

Yes. Definitely. The people coming home from the war filled part of that gap. But there was sort of a depression; at least it was a recession. We became more interested in publicity, because we could see that it was going down, and what could we do to stop it? That was one of the very few down periods that we have had. The publicity drive that came about at the end of the war was a development out of the closing of the Basic

Magnesium plant and the probable closing of Nellis.

*When BMI closed, did you see an industrial future slipping away?*

Oh, yes. We were hoping that it might develop, but there had been so many chemical operations that they had tried to attract here that weren't interested. I don't know why they weren't interested, to tell you the truth. I don't think that it had anything to do with gambling, because at that time gambling was sort of an accepted deal as far as Nevada was concerned. It was one of the down periods, and we were very, very fearful that Las Vegas would go back to being a small-town village.

*Earlier you have spoken about the desire to attract clean industries. Did BMI itself and the prospect of chemical plants conflict with that desire?*

It was a desire that was sort of brushed aside when we had an opportunity to get industries to locate here. We were concerned about that, but we were more concerned about attracting people here to reside. I don't know that we compromised. We relaxed, because anytime that there was any operation that would come to the BMI site, people were interested in getting them, no matter what they would do.

The community was not too concerned about impure air at that time. It was before they had all this furor about the radiation and stuff of that sort. We knew that about the time that the plant out there started in operation there was a concern about what they called the Henderson Cloud. Everybody said it was the plants that were generating

this Henderson Cloud. There was quite a movement then to make them conform to certain standards. It was about the time that the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) was developed, and they were forcing the plants out there to put in filters, which would cost millions of dollars. That was another thing that developed . . . that the plants weren't quite as interested as they would be if they didn't have the EPA regulations.

*Do you think in view of the enormous tourist economy that has been developed, that the area needs to be particularly aware of pollution in order to maintain its attractiveness?*

Oh, yes, I think that you have to have a condition in the community that the tourists can enjoy. They certainly don't enjoy coming in here and seeing that Henderson Cloud and all of the bad air that's being developed. But, the thing of it is that the tourists are creating a great deal of that impure air with their automobiles. The city of Las Vegas is growing; naturally, the automobile population is growing. You get the proper conditions, and that carbon monoxide gas is held right here in the valley. You've got no way to get it out unless the wind blows.

*During the early postwar years, when BMI had closed and the gunnery range seemed to be doomed, it seems as if Las Vegas made a decisive commitment for tourism—that you put most of your energy into promoting Las Vegas as a tourist area above all else.*

That's true, because what else did we have? We had Boulder Dam, which was a magnet for a great many tourists, and that was the anchor for the Desert Sea News Bureau.

*From everything you've said, it seems that there was no equal effort put into attracting industry.*

Well, there was a little interest in attracting industry, but at this time we were more interested in tourists.

*This is interesting because, from what I've read, McCarran favored industrial development for Nevada.*

Well, that was a general idea of McCarran's that industry should be brought into the state of Nevada. He didn't especially tell anybody down here that they should get into the industry deal. I don't think it would have made any difference if the president had got in the fight, because we were enthused and firmly committed to the development of tourism. At that time we had the El Rancho and the Last Frontier and the Flamingo. There were plenty of nice hotels here. And then there were motels that were being built at that time. One motel went in, another would build, and it just sort of snowballed.

*No other concern rivaled tourism for funding?*

No, and it was generally accepted. At the time of the building of Boulder Dam, tourists would come up here and they couldn't find any places to stay while they were here, and the entire town opened up their extra bedrooms to take care of them. So the general public was well instructed in the business of tourism. Everybody accepted that that was the way we should go.

Ever since I came down here in 1929, I knew of publicity for the city of Las Vegas. Everybody was publicity-minded. They wanted to build Las Vegas into something

that would have more worldwide appeal than Las Vegas, New Mexico. Apparently, the people in the East and the Middle West didn't know anything about Las Vegas, Nevada. It was a goal of the people who came here in those early days to make Las Vegas one of the visitation, tourist spots of the nation. Dr. Roy Martin, was the main booster for that group. It all stemmed from the Chamber of Commerce. Maxwell Kelch was the owner and operator of radio station KENO in Las Vegas, and he was the president of the Chamber of Commerce after World War II started, because Marion Earl was president of the Chamber of Commerce when the war started. Just before the Japs bombed Pearl Harbor, Earl had put together a group to go down to Los Angeles on a publicity mission.

*Do you recall anything about promotion before Kelch came? Bob Russell was the head of the publicity committee for the Chamber of Commerce.*

Rob Russell was sort of a character. He ran the Apache Hotel, and he was a very good yarn spinner. He could sit all afternoon and tell you stories that might or might not have been true. He dressed and looked facially like Buffalo Bill. Everybody knew Bob Russell. He was always playing practical jokes, and he was quite a promoter in his own way. I think that Kelch saw him as a possible logo for the city of Las Vegas.

I think that Bob Russell's was one of the first hotels in town that put out a brochure. . on the Apache Hotel. He had connections in Los Angeles, and it's my remembrance that he operated a hotel in Los Angeles and was quite well known among the hotel people in Los Angeles. He was married to the widow of Beeman, who was the Beeman Chewing Gum

people. As a result, he had entry into the other circles and had his publicity quite diverse and would get help from people in the East and the Midwest.

*What was Kelch's background?*

He was a radio man from Los Angeles. I don't know whether he owned or operated one of the larger stations in Los Angeles, but he saw an opportunity up here for a radio station. I am not sure how the connection was made. But, anyway, he came here.

Jack Heaton had the original Las Vegas station; I can't recall the call letters of the radio station. That was the first and only station at that time. It was a one-man operation and he slowly was going broke. I think Max came up here and bought him out. Max was a real go-getter, and he saw the possibilities of the city of Las Vegas and decided that something should be done.

*Did he have any other business concerns here?*

No. Not that I know of, just the radio station. After the radio station he invested in other things.

*How was it possible for him to be so easily accepted by the Chamber of Commerce and the community?*

Well, it was just a thing that he bought this radio station and was on the air. Naturally, people began to flock to him, so to speak. He became quite active in the Chamber of Commerce. I can't remember the exact year, but through Max and his idea of promotion, the Chamber of Commerce hired the J. Walter Thompson Advertising Company.

*Did you know Kelch well?*

Oh, yes, very well. I found him to be a very personable man and very active and very visionary. It was he who saw the possibilities of getting this advertising agency up here.

*Would you say that he was a member of the elite?*

Oh, yes, he was in the inner circle.

*Was your brother friendly with him?*

Oh, yes. I would doubt that he was a very close friend of Ed Clark's, but Ed knew him and believed in what he was trying to do.

*When Maxwell Kelch came in, it seems as though things started to take rather a different direction. Did the Chamber of Commerce have new members at that time? Did you notice any difference in its composition?*

Of course, at that time, there were many people coming into Las Vegas. The majority of them were people who had stores or places of business in other communities and saw the opportunity here, and they brought their ideas with them and spread them through the Chamber of Commerce. That's why the Chamber of Commerce became so powerful, because it was composed of those people. This is no denigration of the people who lived here before, but these people had had more national experience than the people in Las Vegas. Naturally, when anybody with any go-get-em spirit came into the Chamber of Commerce, the Chamber of Commerce was willing to listen to them. It was through that maze that Kelch rose above the ordinary person. Prior to that era, the Chamber of Commerce was composed mostly of local people who had not had the experience in publicity, promotion or anything outside of selling.

*At some point the Chamber decided to bring in speakers from Southern California. I have found the name F. J. Connoly. Do you remember bringing in people like him?*

Well, I can remember bringing in people from outside. I don't remember Connoly. There was a man here by the name of Connoly who was with the water district for a while, now whether he was the Connoly that you're speaking of, I don't know. But there were connections. ..as I said, Bob Griffith had connections with people in Los Angeles through the Shrine, and he brought them up. One of them was a motor editor for the Examiner. He became very friendly to the city of Las Vegas and wrote many stories about Las Vegas and what it had to offer. The other one was a man from the Los Angeles Times who did a great deal of publicity for Las Vegas, starting with the building of the dam. Maybe on a Sunday we'd have the front page of the tourist section of the Times. Through the connections that the local people had with outsiders, it just sort of meshed together. We got things that probably we would not have had had we not had these connections.

*Do you remember Gene Bascon of the All-Year Club?*

Yes. The All-Year Club of Southern California was very helpful in developing Las Vegas. The auto club was much like the AAA is now, only it was confined to the state of California. It was a club that offered tours and gave you help on the highway. If you were a member of the Southern California Auto Club you got help on the highway if your car broke down or something of that sort. They were very helpful. Up to the time that they became interested, there were no

direction signs that led to Las Vegas. They put up the direction signs and gave us a great deal of publicity in their publications. As I say, they were very, very helpful in developing this publicity campaign that came later.

*I believe it was also around this time—in the 1940s—that the Chamber decided to raise its publicity fund.*

Yes, the Live Wire Fund. I think it was Max Kelch's idea; I think he promoted it through the Chamber of Commerce. It was organized so that all of the businessmen of the community contributed so much money to this live Wire Fund, which was set aside entirely for the promotion and publicity of the city.

*I have found the figure of \$75,000 as the target.*

That sounds about right, yes. At that time that was a great deal of money.

*Were there skeptics, people who thought it wouldn't pay off?*

As in every community, when you launch a new campaign, there are all these people who say that it'll fail and refuse to contribute. And there were some of those in the city of Las Vegas—not many—but a few of them. I don't think there'd be anything accomplished by naming them. There was one hotel man and a couple of people in the hardware business. They wanted to know very selfishly, "What's in it for me?" I think that they were people who were more interested in developing their own business than they were in developing the town. They didn't see that development of the town would help in the development of their business.



*Would you say these tended to be the old-timers of the community?*

Some were and some weren't.

*What position did the paper take? Did you write about this?*

We were 100 percent behind the campaign, and we gave them many, many stories. We gave them a lot of free space. The big contributors were people like the bank and the Ed Clark Forwarding Company . . . . Ed Clark was behind it—I don't know how far behind it. And then some of the newer operations that had come in here during the thirties. . . 1929 and 1930 contributed. Bob Russell, of course, in the Apache Hotel and Jim Cashman of Cashman garage and Cadillac company. That type of people contributed—the leaders of the community.

*How did they go about collecting the funds?*

It was just a voluntary deal. They'd send out a bill, and the people would send in their checks. It was accepted 100 percent by the community. Well, I shouldn't say 100 percent, maybe 90 percent by the community.

*Did people go around to businesses, or . . . ?*

No, mostly it was done at the Chamber of Commerce meetings, because that's where most of the leaders congregated once a week, and it was very easy to get the message over through that medium.

*Were there paid fund raisers at any time?*

No, fund raisers were not brought in, as I recall. They might have been brought in

one year, but I'm not sure of that. Mostly it was voluntary contributions and voluntary work—a sort of word-of-mouth thing. The Chamber would say that so-and-so hadn't contributed. Why, one of his friends would go around and pat him on the back and say, "Come on, get your check in." It was a community effort.

We were very successful. I would guess that they reached their goal on that: \$75,000. I would say that it grew each year. It was like the United Way now—they'll put their goal much higher next year than they will this year. It was something that I doubt could have happened in any other place than Las Vegas. Kelch was the leader, but as soon as the thing got underway, it was like Ivory soap, 99 percent pure.

*Was this the fund out of which the J. Walter Thompson Company was hired?*

Yes. They were under contract. The Chamber of Commerce hired J. Walter Thompson Corporation, which is one of the leading advertising agencies in the United States. As I recall, J. Walter Thompson didn't do very much for the city of Las Vegas. It was one of their smaller accounts. I never saw any big results that J. Walter Thompson provided.

*Do you know why they were chosen in the first place?*

I think it was a bidding deal, that they had put out bids to these various agencies in New York City, and J. Walter Thompson was selected as the one that would provide the best interest.

*Do you remember John Van Zandt of the Thompson company?*



I think he was here for a while; I don't remember him. I remember the name, and I remember his connections, but he did not visit the *Review-Journal* very many times, though he may have talked to Al, my brother, but he never talked to me.

*Do you know what kind of campaign they settled on; do you recall any of the particulars?*

It was just a promotion deal that never gelled. I don't think they had any direction, because I never saw any results that came from J. Walter Thompson. The people weren't satisfied with what they were getting for their money, and they were looking around for another outfit . . . the Union Pacific was involved in the picture. I think the whole board of directors of the Chamber of Commerce was dissatisfied with J. Walter Thompson. It was city-wide. There were a lot of complaints that we weren't getting anything for our money. Seventy-five thousand dollars for that time was quite a lot of money.

George Ashby was president of the Union Pacific Railroad; he became quite enamored with the community. In fact, he retired here after he left the presidency of the Union Pacific. He became quite interested in the promotion program. I remember that we had a meeting in his special car that was on the siding at the depot up there. The Chamber of Commerce people and Mr. Ashby and some of his officials of the Union Pacific Railroad discussed this publicity promotion. It was agreed that if the Chamber of Commerce would raise a certain amount of money, that the Union Pacific would double it. As a result, the Union Pacific, which was the original developer of the city of Las Vegas, became involved in this publicity and promotion campaign and hired Steve Hannigan's group,

which had developed Miami, Florida and Sun Valley in Idaho.

Hannigan sent in probably one of the best publicity men that I've ever known. His name was Neil Regan. He was the one who developed the Desert Sea News Bureau, which now is the Las Vegas News Bureau. The Desert Sea News Bureau was an offshoot of Lake Mead. Lake Mead was the desert sea in the news bureau. Hannigan was interested in this until Ashby's retirement-3 or 4 years . . . 4 or 5 years. When Ashby retired, the interest in Las Vegas faded away. The Union Pacific, rightfully so, said that if they did this for Las Vegas, they're going to have to do it for Cheyenne or wherever. And they dropped the contract. But during their time, they developed the thing into an internationally-known outfit, as far as Las Vegas is concerned. You couldn't get more effort than they put into the development of Las Vegas.

*What was their approach? Do you remember the kinds of images and the publicity that they put out?*

It was the same thing that they developed in Miami. They had bathing girls out at the lake, and they had people fishing out there. I can remember one publicity picture that they had of a man pulling a fish out of Lake Mead, and instead of being a bass it was a barracuda. But it didn't make any difference, it was a fish out of the lake. The dam was their anchor, and it flowed over to Las Vegas itself.

*Was this the Fun in the Sun campaign?*

Yes, that's it: Fun in the Sun.

*It sounds as though this was taking quite a different direction. Were you downplaying gambling?*

That was definitely the idea of the Hannigan outfit—to mention gambling only indirectly. As far as the campaign was concerned, it was based on “Fun in the Sun.”

*Why did they decide to take that direction—downplay gambling and play up other aspects of the area?*

It was because of the image that was being created in the East and the Middle West. Las Vegas was Sin City. We had gambling, and we had Bugsy Siegel and all of these things. We had a very bad image.

*When we talked earlier about gangsters and Bugsy Siegel you said that you thought that image was helpful in some ways.*

At that time.

*What made you change your mind?*

It was the Hannigan outfit that changed the whole conception of the publicity and promotion.

*Were you convinced that perhaps this negative image had gone too far, that it could be harmful at a certain point?*

I think it was, because it got into a situation where we had congressional committees coming in here and investigating the operators and a lot of the people of the city of Las Vegas. I think that that was one of the reasons that it was decided to downplay the gambling. [Mr. Cahlan is referring to the Kefauver Commission, which investigated Las Vegas gambling in 1951.—ed.]

*Did Kelch think that was advisable, too?*

Yes. I think that everybody was agreed. When Hannigan came in here, he brought in a whole world of new ideas. As everybody knows, Hannigan was probably one of the finest publicity and promotions groups in the United States. We felt very fortunate in having his organization in here doing the job for us. We, speaking of the Chamber of Commerce, and all of the rest of the people here, more or less turned over all of this promotion and publicity to the Hannigan outfit. They had an office here, and Neil Regan was here 24 hours a day, 365 days out of the year. He developed more ideas for the promotion of Las Vegas than anybody ever thought could be done. Everybody was just thrilled with the promotion we were getting.

*I understand that at this time there were other problems connected with the tourist economy: scalping the tourists, possibilities of tourists being taken advantage of. Do you remember how the Chamber of Commerce handled that kind of thing?*

The main complaint was over the motels in the community. The hotels were rather cooperative, but every weekend we would have quite an influx of people into the city of Las Vegas, and the motels would make you have a 3-day reservation—Friday, Saturday and Sunday. They would raise their rates over the weekends, and the Chamber of Commerce fought it all they could. As I recall it, there was a bill passed in the legislature that set up sort of an observing committee to see that the motels complied with not raising their rates and giving the tourists the break that they should have. It was a battle between the motels and the Chamber of Commerce.

*Were these small, marginal motels that would do this?*

No, it was mostly . . . all of them. Of course, there weren't any large motels. Most of them were maybe 50 rooms.

*Were there any particular motel operators who gave you problems in this area?*

Outsiders would come in to dig the gold. They were gold diggers; there wasn't any doubt about it at that time. They were completely enveloped in their own operation. This is not to put any criticism on some of the people that are here now who operated motels at that time, but it was the gougers who were giving us the trouble.

*I ran across a code of ethics campaign. Was that related to this?*

Yes, that was related. In that code of ethics they set up a sort of a school for the waitresses and waiters and the service station operators to give them ideas as to how they could treat the tourists. A majority of those operations didn't attend the school or the school dropped. I know that because Florence and I were more or less the teachers of the classes. There was a big complaint in the early part in this tourist development that everybody was trying to gouge the tourists. This was set up—the code of ethics and the school—to fight that thing.

*Was that a Chamber of Commerce effort?*

Yes. It worked out fairly well. People would be sent by the operators of the motels or service stations or whatever. The principles espoused were mainly to meet them first with a smile, and treat them like they treat members of their own family. We tried to develop an attitude in Las Vegas that we were very happy to see them here, and we wanted

them to have a good time while they were here.

Interestingly enough, too, during this period, we would get an influx of tourists in here over the 3-day weekend that we just couldn't take care of. The motels were full, the hotels were full, so the Chamber of Commerce launched a campaign of having tourists come and stay in a home. They held an office open on the Friday, Saturday and Sunday where they could dispatch these tourists to the various homes that were willing to take them. It was quite successful. The tourists were very happy with it.

*Did the Desert Sea News Service have any relationship to the paper? Did you work with them?*

Yes, we worked with them. I mean, anything that was beneficial to the community was beneficial to us. I was a very good friend of Neil Regan's, who was the executive who was here for Hannigan. We would sit maybe 3 times a week just discussing his problems and what we could do about them. We worked very closely with it.

*What kinds of things did the Desert Sea News Service send out?*

Mostly they had show guides. They would send out brochures to the hotels in Los Angeles and all over the United States. That was one of the things they did. If there was any special event that was put on—that was staged here, they went all out to promote it over the United States. For a few years we had regattas on the lake, and the speedboats would come up and have their big speedboat runs up here. Malcolm Campbell, who was the world record holder of water speed, came up here a couple of times. Special events were probably their

best bet along with the shows. At that time Las Vegas probably had better stage shows than any other place in the United States. As a result of that, the Hannigan outfit—Neil Regan—made the slogan, The Entertainment Capital of the World.

*Speaking of slogans, do you know where the Glitter Gulch slogan came from?*

Yes, I recall very well, because I was the one who did it. It was in the 1940s, and we ran a contest. I've forgotten whether it was the Chamber of Commerce or the newspaper, but anyway, there was a contest. It was put into the Review-Journal, and people would send in slogans and these would be turned over to the Hannigan outfit—they would choose. It was my suggestion that it was Glitter Gulch because of all the lights that were on Fremont Street. We used it in the newspaper quite liberally whenever we'd be talking about Fremont Street.

*I would like to quote from an article, which is interesting in view of this. I'm wondering if you wrote this. [laughter] The article was entitled "So Long Glitter Gulch," and appeared around 1948. "The publicity committee feels that Las Vegas has changed from a vulgar, bad-mouthed brat into a more reserved adolescent, and it's about time its mouth was washed out with a strong dose of soap so it won't insult the sensibilities of the tourists." Did you write that?*

Yes. It was another one of those turnovers. There again we were trying to create an image, and Glitter Gulch at that time would be referring back to a mining community where anything went. I agreed at the time that this was not the thing to do, but, as of now, I would say that Glitter Gulch was a very good description of downtown Las Vegas. The thing

of it is that the whole conception of Las Vegas had been changed about 3 or 4 times. We wanted to become clean . . . early. Then it was all right to have the gangsters in there, because they were attractions in themselves; then they decided that it wasn't. The thing developed so that now Glitter Gulch is something that is accepted.

*Someone has said that national magazines were " . . . doing a hatchet job on Las Vegas."*

It wasn't so much the magazines, although Life and Look didn't do us much good. They did some good, because Life came in here at one time and did a series in their "Life Goes to a Party" and showed all of the resort places in here. But when the state of Nevada passed the gambling law, we became targets for all of the reformers in the world. We were the bastard child of the United States. And then it apparently shadowed off, so we didn't get as much publicity. But we were getting that kind of negative publicity. Every time that there was anything that went on in Las Vegas or anything that was created in Las Vegas, we'd get front page stories in the New York Times just shooting at us pretty bad.

*If you're going to have a tourist town and a tourist economy, the image has to be carefully managed . . . even say, manipulated?*

Oh, definitely. There's no doubt about it, because you want the tourists to feel at home when they come to a place like this. What has Las Vegas got to offer? Las Vegas has to offer the gambling casinos, where you have got casinos that are not duplicated anywhere in the world. When the tourists come in here and see that sort of thing, they're impressed. It's the same as the development of the airport in McCarran Field 2000. The airport out there

now is one of the most glamorous in the whole world. Everybody says that it is . . . . It's developed now into the fact that anything that goes out over the wire or is imprinted or any brochure that is made or anything that comes out of the city of Las Vegas has to be A number one. It can't be shoddy; it can't be shabby. If it's costly, so be it. That idea has pervaded throughout the economy of the community. I remember when I was director of the Southern Nevada Industrial Foundation, I went back to a meeting; I think it was in New York. I took one of the brochures that the Chamber of Commerce put out, "Las Vegas Report," and put it on the table with the other brochures that were there, and it just stood out like a big, blazing . . . . That is the thing now that all of the promoters of the city of Las Vegas have in mind, that if it comes out of Las Vegas, it's got to be A number one.

*Do you trace that development all the way back to the forties and the promotional efforts of the Desert Sea News Bureau and Hannigan?*

That's right. It goes from Dr. Roy W. Martin on up to the present time, because that was the prevailing attitude of all the community—not all of the community, but the majority of the community—during the thirties and forties. Of course, it slopped over into the fifties, sixties, seventies and eighties . . . getting better all the time.

*It was around 1949 that you decided to go after the convention trade. Do you remember that development?*

Yes. There had been conventions here that had not been very large. The first large convention that was brought in here was brought in by the Junior Chamber of Commerce when there were no hotel

facilities, and they had to sleep in the sleeping cars that they traveled in, and they had a ball. George "Bud" Albright, who was on the county commission at the time, decided that there was a necessity for a convention hall here. That would probably be in the 1950s.

*Did you go after the convention trade before you even had facilities?*

Oh, yes. Definitely.

*How did you propose to solve the problem of space?*

We just went after the smaller conventions that we knew we could take care of. Then Bud had this idea of a convention center, and that was when they passed the bonds and built the convention center out there. At that time, it was the largest building in the area. There were a lot of people who thought that it would be a white elephant. There are always those feetdraggers who don't want to do anything but sit and count their coupons. They couldn't see where this would benefit anybody.

The first convention that they had out there when they opened it was the World Congress of Flight, which I think was an air force promotion. Anyway, that brought about 25,000 to 30,000 people to the city of Las Vegas. From that beginning—that small beginning—it's got to where we're getting 85,000 to 100,000 delegates to the convention center. It's been enlarged at least 3 times. The reason that the conventions are so successful is that there are plenty of rooms within walking distance of the convention center.

During the time that the convention center was being built, I think it was the Flamingo that first started putting in their own convention quarters. We fought it like the dickens, because we figured that they'd drain



off the conventions that would be going to the convention center, and we'd be stuck with the bonds. But it turned out just the opposite. It just fed the convention center. Now you've got convention halls in all of the hotels. Very fortunately, it turned out as it has.

Las Vegas has been very fortunate, very lucky in the things that they have done—the convention center and the hotels with their accommodations, and everything. There were harpers, as I told you earlier, that when they put in El Rancho it was too far out of town, and it wouldn't succeed. When they put in the Last Frontier, 2 of them couldn't exist at the same time. One might succeed, but 2 of them couldn't exist at the same time. Fortunately, it just grew like topsy, just like the community. People don't quite understand how it is that Citicorp came into the city of Las Vegas. Now, Citicorps is a banking outfit, and with the image that Las Vegas had years back, they wouldn't even take a look at Las Vegas. Now here they are, and they're going to attract more.

*To return to the 1940s, I've read that there was a proposal at one time to restrict building styles to a western theme. Do you remember that?*

That's right, yes, and the *Review-Journal* was completely in back of it. I supported it very definitely.

*Where did this idea come from?*

I think it came out of the Chamber of Commerce meetings. I can't tell you exactly; there were so many ideas that came out of these various people. We were to have those balconies on the second story and mission-style buildings, but it was finally decided that it would cost too much money to tear out the ones that they had.

*Did Hannigan actually oppose that?*

I'm not exactly sure. I would say probably that they did, because it would sort of put it into a pattern that couldn't be broken and would hinder growth downtown. If people had to build this sort of thing, they wouldn't be interested. The idea just fell of its own weight. It was a good idea to start with, but it came a little too late. Had it come in the 1930s, it might have succeeded, because the downtown area was just shantytown. It would have been very simple to make the people who came in there and took over these shacks around Fremont Street to conform, but it was too late at the time. It was a good idea, but it came too late, I think.

*You've already mentioned that in 1949 the Union Pacific withdrew its support for the Las Vegas publicity effort. That must have been a real blow to your finances.*

It was quite a blow, but the Chamber of Commerce rebounded and just set their goals higher, and it kept on going. Of course, we dropped the Hannigan outfit and set up the Las Vegas News Bureau. Very fortunately, they got a very capable young man, Don Payne, who took over as the director of the News Bureau. He had done a very fine job developing it along the same lines that it would have been developed had it been with the Union Pacific, except not that much money behind it.

*I understand that at the time you had this financial crisis, you were able to get a contribution from the county commission. Do you remember their coming through with money?*



Yes, that was part of the development, and I believe the city also contributed so much money to the development. It was about that time that the Southern Nevada Industrial Foundation was set up. That was a group promoted by Mr. Laub. (I can't think of his first name.) He was the man who promoted the idea of the community leaders getting together and trying to widen the economic base of the city of Las Vegas and trying to get industry to come in here. While it didn't seem to succeed at the time, it laid the groundwork of the city of Las Vegas and the county for that matter. I don't think we would have got M & M Candy and Levi Strauss and those people had not the foundation been laid by this Southern Nevada Industrial Foundation. It is now the Nevada Development Authority.

*Returning to this promotion problem and your economic crisis at the end of the forties, I have read that at this time there was also another problem: a rift between the Strip hotels and some of the other contributors to your campaign. Do you remember the difficulties?*

Yes, unfortunately the Strip has felt and still does feel that the Strip is entirely apart from the city of Las Vegas. I can recall during the 1940s, during the Helldorado parades, that the various Strip hotels would enter floats in the beauty parade. These floats they would enter in the parade would do well in the Pasadena Tournament of Roses. They had beautiful floats here, and they'd cost anywhere from \$40,000 to \$50,000. We got regional publicity on that, but since the corporations took over the Strip out there, there doesn't seem to be the same sort of cooperation as in the early days of gambling and casinos on the Strip.

Disagreements arose over who belonged to what, or what belonged to who. The hotels

thought that they were operating out there on their own in their own little bailiwick, and they didn't have to have any help from anybody. That is sort of the attitude now, although there is some cooperation on some of the larger deals that I think the 2 of them had got together on.

As an instance, I'll show you the difference and the feeling between the Strip and the downtown area. During the seventy-fifth birthday of the city of Las Vegas, I was director of that program. It was my thought that we could put in plaques in the community as to where the first telephone company was, where the first schoolhouse was, and where the first this and that were. I went out to the Sahara Hotel and wanted to put in a plaque for Western Airlines and for the development of the airport out there. The manager of the hotel said, "We don't have anything to do with the birthday of the city of Las Vegas. We are not part of the city of Las Vegas."

The city of Las Vegas came back and said, "Now, you put the plaque on the north side of the Sahara, because if you put it on the south side, it's in the county." It was that kind of penny ante thinking of these people. There have been a lot of things that have gone on that the Strip has not been interested in developing. They may feel now like they were the ones that developed the city of Las Vegas, which probably is half true. But Las Vegas feels that if it hadn't been for Las Vegas, the Strip wouldn't be there. It's a petty squabble, but it's getting into politics and has gotten into politics, which is not good for the community.

*What did Kelch think about this squabble between the Strip and other businesses in the late forties and early fifties? Was he concerned about that?*

I don't think that he was as active in that era as he had been before. He got out as president—he served 2 terms as president of the Chamber of Commerce—and did a very fine job. After he left the Chamber of Commerce, I think he felt that he had made his contribution, and he'd take care of his family rather than the community. He had other irons in the fire. You can't blame him, because he did a tremendous amount of work, and it was free.

In 1950 the hotels formed their own association—the Resort Hotel Association. It was something of a protection for the hotels, mainly in the laws that were being passed at the legislature. It was sort of a benevolent protective organization. They didn't have much to do with the day-to-day squabbles that went on in the community. They were looking at the controls that might be put on the gambling. It was sort of a self-serving organization.

*Do you think it in any way drained off funds that might have gone to the larger publicity fund?*

No, I don't think so. As far as the publicity funds now are concerned, the community is large enough so that the county contributes to the fund to the Chamber of Commerce. I think the city also does, and it's more or less self-sufficient.

*What happened to the Live Wire Fund?*

The Live Wire effort sort of faded out. I am not familiar with the internal operation of the News Bureau. I think that it is supported by county and city funds. I'm not familiar with this, familiar enough to tell you exactly what happened, but I don't believe that the

contributions of the various hotels and motels are continuing.

*I have read that the Chamber went to the state legislature to try to increase property taxes so that the publicity fund could get more money from the county.*

I believe that is true and that the state did increase the property tax, and that's where the money comes from now.

*Do you know whose idea this was?*

It was probably Bill Moore's.

*Did the Review-Journal support that idea?*

Oh, yes.

*According to one of my sources, the resignation of Kelch in 1953 marked the decline of community-wide boosterism. Would you like to comment on that?*

I think that is a little overstated, because I don't think that Kelch was a one-man crew. I think that it was the Chamber of Commerce. Kelch gave them the ideas and gave them the lead, and they followed. As in any other organization, you have leaders who develop. The Chamber of Commerce has been probably the greatest thing that has happened to Las Vegas, because they have always been active, and they have always sought new ideas, and they have gotten behind most any project that would help the community. They're still operating that way.

*I think he may be referring here to that split between the hotels and their self-interests and other aspects of the community. Do you*

*think this was a turning point for that kind of cooperation?*

I don't think that it was the turning point because of Kelch's resignation. It was a turning point because the hotels changed their operations. In my opinion, I think that the hotels made a very, very bad choice when they decided to secede from the community as a whole. When they brought corporate gambling into the community, where corporations could operate, that was practically the death of any compact that was made between the city and the county as regards promotion and publicity. The community thinking entirely changed after the Strip became the Strip. Those people—Bill Moore, Bob Griffith, R. E. Griffith—were community interested. They were interested in the development of Las Vegas. These corporations couldn't care less. It's the same thing as the Union Pacific dropping the Hannigan contract, because, if they did it for Las Vegas they had to do it for other places along their railroad. Now, if the Hilton Hotel does something for Las Vegas, they've got to do something for somebody else. It's the same corporate thinking. I can't tell you now who are the managers of any of the hotels or motels out on the Strip. I doubt very much whether the ordinary person could tell you that. Whereas before that time—of course, we were smaller than we are now—we knew everybody from the hotel manager to the dishwasher. It was a family affair; now it is more or less of a corporate affair.

Around 1950, the Southern Nevada Industrial Foundation [SNIF] was founded by a man named Laub. He got the idea that if gambling ever was voted out, they wouldn't have an industry here and that we had better widen our base for the future. He got together a

lot of bankers and attorneys and businessmen who were interested in the future of the city and formed the Southern Nevada Industrial Foundation, with the idea of going out and seeking people to come to Las Vegas.

Andy Ruckman was the executive director of the Southern Nevada Industrial Foundation. They made junkets back to the industrial capitals of the United States and the financial capitals and tried to get them interested. If they were going to move or put in a new plant, this was the place that they should consider. Andy Ruckman was there for 5 or 7 years. When he died I was named the executive director of SNIF. We continued those junkets to various places: Atlanta, New York City, Chicago, Cincinnati and all of those industrial centers and banking centers. The effect at that time was not very good. There were very few industries, if any, that came to Las Vegas as a result of SNIF.

When we spoke to people, they'd be polite to us and say, "Yes, we'll consider it," but no action. In my own estimation, between Ruckman and myself, we built a foundation for an interest in the community. Some of these industries that have come in here lately have been a part of the foundation that we built. I can't give you any definite industries, because I have been out of SNIF for so long that I've forgotten who we contacted. I am sure that our efforts in going to these people in Boston and Hartford (for the insurance) . . . we tried to cover all sorts of industry. I am sure that when it came down to the board of directors, that somebody had attended one of our meetings, and they'd say, "Well, why don't you consider Las Vegas."

*Can you think of any example of an industry or business concern that you succeeded in attracting?*

It's been so long ago, I've forgotten what people we visited. I visited hundreds of people. I don't think there was anybody who came in here as a result of either Ruckman or myself. But I think we built the pathway to Las Vegas before I left the organization in the 1960s.

*How was SNIF financed?*

Anybody who was interested paid a fee. I've forgotten what the fee was, but it was kicked into the general pot. The county contributed money and so did the city. And it was with that money that we operated.

*How did these businessmen and community leaders in other parts of the country react to the image of Las Vegas? How did they respond when you told them, "I'm from Las Vegas"?*

The first question they asked, "Do you gamble very much? That would be an opening for the statement that I always made to them, that there were 2 communities as far as Las Vegas was concerned: there was the Strip, and then there was the residential area. I tried to explain to them that the people who lived in Las Vegas lived the same kind of life that people in Paducah and places like that lived. They had their social life, and they did the usual things that most people residing in any community did . . . no different. I had very fine entre to starting a conversation with anybody that I met. Everybody knew where Las Vegas was and what it was supposed to be. When they would ask these questions, I would ask them, "Have you ever been to Las Vegas?"

They'd say, "N, we just read it in the newspapers."

And I said, "Well, you come out, and I, as an ex-newspaperman, will take you out and show you some things that you wouldn't

believe in Las Vegas." They didn't know that there was an air base here. They had forgotten that Boulder Dam was close to Las Vegas. They didn't know anything about it except what they read. The press was not especially good to Las Vegas. Every time that anybody was in trouble here they were painted as a member of the mob. There wasn't any doubt in the world that the mob operated here and perhaps still does, but they stay in their own corner. They don't bother any of the people in the community.

Anybody with any reputation at all didn't want to be associated with the reputation that the mob had. The banks were not very enthusiastic about bringing any of their branches into the community, because they didn't want to be associated with the image that Las Vegas had. That's one of the things that still exists. Citicorp, when they came in here, didn't want their address known as Las Vegas, so they put in a few ponds out there where they were building and called it The Lakes. Their address is The Lakes, Nevada. They don't have a post office there; their mail comes through Las Vegas. So they just rule themselves.

I took the position that members of the mob were not involved in any of the politics and anything regarding the development of the community; that they sort of stayed in the background, those gamblers. They were as much interested in seeing the community grow, but for a different reason. The more people you got in here, the more people would gamble.

*Did you ever get the sense that prospective businessmen were concerned that their employees might gamble?*

There was that feeling, that there are only a certain amount of people who can take the

city of Las Vegas, because it's a wide open town. It's the only one in the United States. They've never lived in one like this before. It's a 24-hour town. You can go get yourself a hamburger at 2:00 in the morning just as easy as you can get it at 2:00 in the afternoon! It's a freedom that is not enjoyed by a majority of the residents in the rest of the United States.

*How do you think this was a concern for other business leaders?*

That the employees might not be as sharp the next day after they'd been out on a binge or something. And gambling losses could probably concern the employees to such an extent that they wouldn't be able to do their business. We've always known that we've had an image here that had to be overcome. Before Steve Hannigan came in here we were always promoting freedom like gambling and that sort of business. After Hannigan came, they painted a different picture of the recreation possibilities.

*When you were trying to promote Las Vegas as a place to establish a business, what was the response you got from the big hotels and resorts?*

There were representatives of the resort hotels who went with us on these junkets. The people who we were talking to could get it from the horse's mouth. Here were these gamblers. They had gambling questions that would be asked. We'd say, "Well, all right, here's the man. Ask him what you want to . . ." show the people that these guys weren't goons—didn't wear a gun and a shoulder holster. Of course, we were selective about who we took.

*During the 1950s, when Las Vegas became more developed, were there any important new social clubs and organizations?*

You would get expansion of the Rotary Club and the Kiwanis Club and the Lions Club and those civic organizations. There were social organizations, but I can't recall the names of any of them. It was a general growth throughout the community.

*Do you recall a particular place where the city leaders would meet to discuss problems?*

Yes. Bob Baskin's restaurant. Some of the leaders met there in the morning and had breakfast. And there was a group of people that congregated on a Saturday around noon for brunch at El Rancho. That was where Howard Hughes first became known by the community leaders. He was staying at the El Rancho, and he found out about this group. He was interested in the development of Las Vegas. He'd wander in and maybe stay for half an hour and join in the discussion, but was not very active. He was more of a listener than he was a talker.

I first met Howard Hughes when he'd come to these brunches that the people had. He probably did not remember me. I doubt very much whether he remembered the majority of the people who were out there at the meetings, because it was sort of an informal deal. I could see from the conversations that I had with him that he was 20 years ahead of everybody else, as far as his ideas were concerned.

I think that this should be given because it clears up a lot of stuff that is absolutely wrong: he was one of the people who had developed the idea of a speed train between here and Los Angeles. It was his feeling and the feeling of Clifton Moore, who was the general manager of the Los Angeles airport, and Del Webb, who was quite friendly with Howard Hughes, that the air above Los Angeles was going to be almost as crowded as the ground transportation. You've seen and read in the



newspapers of the crashes that have occurred as a result of that large group of airplanes that are using Los Angeles International Airport. Something had to be done about it.

I was first brought into that deal by Herb McDonald at the Sahara Hotel, which was a Del Webb outfit. He approached me and showed me a sketch that Hughes had made of this ground speed transportation. It was Hughes's idea to build an overseas airport on the Mormon Mesa, which is about 35,40 miles north of the city of Las Vegas. It was a long stretch of flat mountain, which would be just perfect for an airport. The valley that was formed was so it would accommodate quite a number of planes. It was his idea that this airport would be built on the mesa and would accommodate all of the overseas airplanes that came into the Los Angeles airport, thereby creating a lot more air space than they have at the present time, and then take them down from Las Vegas to Palmdale, which was another airport in the Los Angeles area, by speed train.

I presented it to the group. They just didn't seem to be interested in the idea, but I kept promoting it. I had several meetings with Del Webb in Los Angeles talking about this and asking him questions that he could carry over to Hughes. I never did see Hughes myself; I always dealt through Del Webb. I kept it alive, and I finally got some of the Chamber of Commerce people interested in it, because I inveigled them into going to Los Angeles with me on one of the trips when I was to meet with Del Webb. I think there were two or three people from the Chamber of Commerce. We convinced them that it was practical and that it could give a lot more safety to the Los Angeles airport than they had at the time.

The Southern Nevada Industrial Foundation started to get to work on it. TRW drew up a prospectus, and it was presented to

a meeting of the Chamber of Commerce and anybody else that was interested. We had a meeting held in Las Vegas, and I think Del Webb was here to speak to that group. They endorsed the thing as a necessity, practically, if they were to clear out the air space in Los Angeles.

We made an appointment with the director of the federal air transportation committee to present it to them. We went back to Washington and spent maybe 45 minutes or an hour with this committee, which was something that usually doesn't happen. You go in for 5 minutes and that's it. We got them interested in the thing. They gave their approval to it and prepared a bill, which would appropriate (I've forgotten how much money it was) for a very decisive investigation into the probabilities of success of such a group. They found out that this would be a tremendous advantage to the airline services using Los Angeles.

The federal air transportation committee were to recommend to the Congress that they appropriate money for it, and we were very enthused, because it seemed to be right on its way. That was maybe a month before the earthquake that they had down in Los Angeles, which blew out the culverts and overpasses and just raised havoc with the ground transportation between here and Los Angeles. Had it not been for the earthquake, I am sure that we would have had high-speed ground transportation in operation now. It was the earthquake which put the kibosh on that idea.

I didn't have any great conversations with Howard Hughes. I met him, and we would discuss for maybe 5 minutes as he was walking back to his cabana. I can say that I have had words with him, but I never did know him. There was another time when I did meet him. He had an experimental airplane that he was doing something for the government. Nobody



was able to find out what it was. This pilot in some way lost control of the plane, and it flew into Lake Mead. Hughes came up here. The pilot was saved and was in the hospital.

The public relations man for TWA, which Hughes owned, was a very good friend of mine. I heard of the crash and went out to the Last Frontier where this public relations man named Clancy Dehoff was waiting for me to have a drink after work. After the paper had come out, I went out to the Last Frontier and told this publicity man about the plane going down in the lake. We rushed out to Boulder City and found out that the pilot was in the Boulder City hospital and was able to talk. We went in and talked to him for about half an hour. Later, Hughes came into the room and said, "Now, don't worry about anything, your hospital bills or anything that might happen later. You're well taken care of." I had some conversation with him there.

*When Hughes came to Las Vegas, he eventually controlled a large segment of the Las Vegas economy because of his varied investments.*

He owned, I think, 7 gambling places. I thought he was reaching out a little too far; that he'd just be able to control everything in the city or the state by owning these gambling houses—controlling the legislature, for that matter. I think I said so in the editorial column. The legislature was very concerned, and so was the Gaming Commission.

On the positive side, Hughes came to Las Vegas and was involved in the economy of the community. I am sure that had it not been for his illness and his death, that El Rancho property probably would have been Hughes Medical Center, which now, I believe, is in Houston. I was close to a lot of the people who knew Hughes and had worked for Hughes, so I was able to get some information from

them as to what was going on. Yes, I think he contributed a great deal.

Now, I understand Hughes bought 420,000 acres of land up in the Potosi Mountain Valley. From what I can learn (I have some pipeline into the Summa Corporation), he was going to develop that into a new community. The people who won the lawsuit over who was supposed to control the empire after Hughes's death are very interested in the development. They founded the Summa Corporation, which has been doing a tremendous amount of development in the Las Vegas area.

*What did you know about Hughes's so-called "Mormon Mafia"?*

I knew 2 or 3 of the people; they were his secretaries. They were people who came in here with Hughes. I think they came from California. There were 2 or 3 Mormons that were on the inner circle. He could trust them to keep their mouths shut and not give any leaks. He was very interested in the Mormon religion, I believe.

*Now, why do you say that?*

I'm not sure. Just from things that I've heard about him in general conversation. I knew 2 of the people who worked in Hughes's inside office.

*Did they every give you any inside information?*

In general conversation they'd . . . they wouldn't volunteer any information. But, as the conversation went along during the evening, things that they said made me think that Hughes wanted people involved with him who would keep their mouths shut and wouldn't divulge any of the stuff that Hughes was planning.



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## THE EMERGENCE OF A CASINO DOMINATED ECONOMY, 1930-1950

*Nevada liberalized its divorce and gambling laws in 1931. What effect did this have on gambling and divorce in Las Vegas?*

As far as divorce was concerned, there was nothing . . . they didn't pay much attention to it—didn't try to capitalize on it. When the gambling law was passed, it only was pointed at the machine games. Before the gambling law was passed you could play poker and whist and card games like that where the dealership passed from one man to the other. That always was in. As far as gambling was concerned in the city of Las Vegas, nobody seemed to be interested in it at the time the games were played. There were a few places down here like the Northern Club, which got the first gambling license in the city. There were only 2 or 3 other places they played cards, and machine gambling was not too prevalent. There were places like the Northern Club and the Smoke House, which Bob Griffith and a partner owned, and the Elks Club, where they would have gambling and poker. It was open, yes. But as

far as the machine gambling was concerned, there was none at all. And Las Vegas never took advantage of the gaming law during the 1930s.

*If there had been no Depression, do you think gambling would have been . . . ?*

I doubt it. The thing of it was that as far as gambling was concerned, gambling in Reno was wide open, and they had a big 6 wheel. There was the Willows, which was a resort out on the Truckee River about 2 miles west of Reno itself. It had all the gambling—it had craps and roulette and all of that stuff. Nobody paid any attention to them.

*Do you know anybody down here who backed the gambling legislation?*

I doubt very much whether they knew it until it was passed, because the communications between here and Reno were so bad that anything that happened in Reno took about a week to filter down here.

Somebody would come down from Reno and tell about something that happened up there.

*At the time that the gambling legislation came through, did anybody oppose it?*

The church people opposed it. Well, I wouldn't say every single church, but the majority. The Mormons weren't interested in having gambling, although I don't think that they took any active part.

*How did you know that they opposed it?*

Just by word of mouth. They would say, "Well, we don't want to be known as the gambling capital of the world." It was against God's law. I think that that was the reason, not only for the Mormons, but for the rest of the churches. The churches didn't send parties up from here to oppose it or vote in favor of it, because the transportation was as bad as the communication. If you went up to Reno, you couldn't get up and back inside of 4 days.

The newspaper didn't take any stand on gambling as far as the state is concerned, because there wasn't any problem down here. As a matter of fact, Al and I agreed completely because gambling has always been a part of the life of the state of Nevada. You take when the pioneers were coming through here, they were always gambling. They'd have gambling parties at night to pass the time, and it was part of the life in the state of Nevada.

*Did you or your brother gamble?*

No. I guess since the time that I've been here in Las Vegas, I've put \$50 on the tables or in the slot machines, and that was only because I'd be out with some people from out of town. Al never visited the gambling places.

We weren't personally interested either for or against it. We thought there was a possibility that gambling might develop into what it has developed into. I would say we saw the possibility when Tommy Hull took it. Las Vegas didn't take advantage of the gambling law until Tommy Hull built the El Rancho.

*Did any new clubs or bars open immediately after the legislation was passed?*

Well, the Boulder Club was built in 1931 or 1932. That was the only big one that had the wide open machine-type gambling.

*Who would frequent a place like that?*

Everybody. Very interestingly, the labor organizations had their headquarters up above the Boulder Club. It was in the Depression, and everybody was hoping that anything that they did would help out bringing tourists or somebody in here.

Gambling was under the direction of the sheriff. He recommended to the county commission. I can't be positive that there was a fee attached. They had no problems, because most of the gambling that was done and the places that were run were all local.

Las Vegas didn't do anything about the divorce law. The divorce legislation meant very little to Las Vegas, because Las Vegas wasn't known as a place where you could get a divorce in the state of Nevada. Reno very definitely was. A great deal of their economy went into divorces. But as far as being nationally known or regionally known, for that matter, Las Vegas was not a part of the state of Nevada. They promoted divorce as much as they could locally, but it wasn't known all over the nation until Ria Gable came here to get her divorce from Clark in 1939. The first world or nationwide publicity

gag was the promotion of Ria Gable when she came here for a divorce.

Ria came in here to get a divorce, and nobody knew she was in here except Frank McNamee, who was her attorney. He wanted to know from Florence how they could keep it quiet so that nobody'd come in and keep bothering her about being here for a divorce. Florence told him, "Well, you let me go over and talk to her, and I'll convince her that she will be let alone." So Florence went over and talked to her and told her if we publicize this once now, everybody'd forget about her being here and she wouldn't have any problems.

Florence and I and a man by the name of Phillips, who was here for a divorce also, wrote a full-page article about Ria being here and what she was doing, so that nobody would have any questions to answer. We sent that out to 52 newspapers all over the country, and I think we got it in 48 of them, so it was quite widespread. The Chamber of Commerce underwrote the cost of putting this page together. I think it was \$1,000 or something like that. That was probably the first national publicity that we had received. And that really started the publicity drive for Las Vegas. I mean before that it was more hit or miss. After they found out what they could do with this one page that we sent out, then they became very interested in building the community through publicity. They would have brochures that would talk about the easy divorce law. From that time on, the divorce colony grew here.

Ria stayed at a ranch out in Paradise Valley. She became well known by the people in the city of Las Vegas because she would go down to the gambling place that was in the Apache Hotel and deal. She was a local person. They never bothered her, and she said she had the most wonderful time she'd ever had in her life.

*Was there any local opposition to the divorce situation? Were women upset by the idea that Las Vegas would be a divorce . . . ?*

Not very. They didn't object down here. The churches weren't especially interested in having divorcees come to Las Vegas, but, there again, it was a new source of revenue. They weren't touchy about the image, but they just didn't think that they were living up to God's ordinance. The Mormons didn't express their opinions if they did have them. I know that they were not happy with either the divorce or the gambling situation.

It was a part of the thing that runs all the way through all of this stuff that I'm telling you: the main thing that the people of the city of Las Vegas wanted to do was to put Las Vegas, Nevada on a dateline. We were always having our mail routed through Las Vegas, New Mexico—missent to Las Vegas, New Mexico. It was the main desire or drive to have Las Vegas become a community that would be recognized all over the United States. And look what we got now—publicity did the whole thing!

*What was the national response to Nevada's gambling and divorce legislation?*

They wanted to kick us out of the Union. We were the bastard child of the United States. It was just that we did something that they didn't approve of. The majority of the people who lived in the United States did not approve of either gambling or divorce. We had an image that developed through the gambling and divorce stories. We had an image of being Sin City. Of course, it didn't trouble me at all that they had us pegged as Sin City.

*Was there any concern that it might actually backfire and discourage people from coming here?*

Yes, definitely.

*Where was that discussed?*

All over town, anyplace you went. But the thing of it is that I felt much like the politician that says, "I don't care what you say about me as long as you spell my name right." And I could see in my own mind that if we got all this publicity on the gangsters and so forth, that you'd get a lot of people to come in here just to see if there were a lot of people who were wandering around the streets with a shoulder holster under their arm. Of course, we did get some very, very bad publicity. During the Bugsy Siegel era we got a black eye, and that hurt. Most of your true Nevadans didn't bother to comment one way or the other on the gambling or divorce laws. They were laws; let's abide by them. As I say, it didn't bother me. We just went on with our own lives and developed things that we thought would counteract some of this publicity. We had postcards of an artesian well that was flowing out here and stuff of that sort to let people know that there was something else besides gambling and divorce here.

*Do you believe that by passing liberal divorce and gambling legislation the state might have been setting the stage for long-term antagonisms between Nevada and other states?*

I don't think they even thought of it, not the legislators that passed the bills. They felt that here are a couple of chances to bring more money into the community. Let's go! They didn't think anything about the future, I don't think.

*Was there any effort to bring other kinds of industry to Las Vegas in the 1930s?*

Not at that time, not early on. The Chamber of Commerce'd hear of somebody who wanted to move, and they'd try and bring them in. But the majority of the interests, as far as industry in Las Vegas was concerned, was formulated later by the Southern Nevada Industrial Foundation. In the 1930s they were more interested in getting gamblers in here. They knew that Nevada would get a certain amount of cheap power and water from the dam. And that was one of the things that we publicized. After the war was over, Basic Magnesium was bought by the state, and it changed.

The divorce and gambling laws in the state of Nevada precluded to a great degree any large corporation coming in here and setting up headquarters. That's the word—discouraging. Nobody thought about that at the time. You couldn't bring any big bank in here because bankers would be setting up shop in a gambling place, and was your money safe? City boosters were more interested in the 1930s, during the time that the dam was being built and just after, in letting people know what kind of a climate we had out here and trying to bring in the retirement people.

*Did they think they might be sacrificing an industrial economy in favor of this other type of economy?*

I don't think they thought about it. It was just a conglomerate drive for anybody we could get in here. The long term didn't make any difference. It does now. Bob Griffith and a couple of the other members of the Chamber of Commerce and I and these 2 people from Los Angeles would sit around the hotel room, finish off a bottle of whiskey. You'd be surprised at the ideas that can generate out the bottom of a whiskey bottle. We'd sit down



and plan . . . One of the fellows was head of the Hormel meat packing place. We had him almost convinced of moving his plant in from Los Angeles—that was in the late 1930s. I've forgotten what blew it up, but he didn't make the move. Those are the kinds of people that we wanted in here. We didn't want any steel mills.

*Was there ever any conversation that went something like this: "By bringing gambling in here, we may be cutting our throats down the line when it comes to industry"?*

No way. There was nobody who was that visionary. I mean they weren't looking that far ahead. Mostly it was now that we wanted it here. There were very few visionary people here in the thirties. As long as they were making a living here, that was all right for them.

When the dam was nearly completed, some of the people were wondering what would happen after the dam was completed. How could we draw people into the community and get the dateline back on the front pages of the newspapers around the United States?

There was a fellow by the name of Clyde Zerby, who was a former carnival barker, who came in here with an idea that Las Vegas would be a nice community to have a once-a-year festival. He suggested the return to the Old West. The Elks, headed by Jim Cashman, decided that it was a good idea, and they set it up.

In 1935 we put together a big festival in a large vacant lot down on Sixth and Fremont Street, where the old telephone company building used to be. We put up tents and things where we could have girlie shows. As I remember it, Frances McNamee and Ruthie Doolittle and a little Mexican girl who was dancing in the line out at the Meadows were

the leaders of the chorus line that they had. Mike Marinovich, who was one of the Las Vegas High School football stars, was in it, and Zerby's son was the leading light.

Jim decided that the best thing we could do would be to put on an oldtimers parade on Thursday night and a kiddies parade on Saturday afternoon and hold a rodeo at night. The first rodeo was a very poor success, because the performance was given in a sort of corral thing, and the brown Brahma bull jumped the fence, got loose and ran up Fremont Street. All the local cowboys were out trying to corral the rodeo. If they didn't have the Brahma bull, they didn't have anything, because the bull was trained. [laughter] They finally got him and brought him back. That was the start of the Helldorado. I think they had their fiftieth anniversary here about 4 or 5 years ago.

Gene Ward, who was the owner of the Mesquite Grocery Store, decided that we ought to have a beauty parade. So, we put in the beauty parade on Friday to start with, and then we moved it to Sunday. That was some time in the 1940s when there were about 4 or 5 hotels here: there was the El Rancho, and the Last Frontier and the Flamingo . . . They vied for prizes, and they put together floats that would have gone very well in the Rose Parade. They'd spend between \$40,000 and \$50,000 for a float for the Helldorado parade. A couple of years, we got it televised on regional television. It was quite a deal for a long time.

*Was your main interest in this to attract tourists or to make the news or both?*

Both. Get the publicity so that the tourists would want to come in here. We were very successful! We had parades that were led by

the Pasadena Junior College band and bands from Nevada and Utah, Arizona . . . . During the war, we were the only celebration that could be given. Gasoline was rationed, but they figured that we had so many war people that we could hold it. We had Nellis Air Force Base, Basic Magnesium, and Patton's Africa corps were having maneuvers out at Needles, California. We'd bring in maybe 20,000 people for the celebration. That lasted until about the 1950s, when the hotels and the downtown gambling houses wouldn't support it any more.

Helldorado has degenerated, and I say degenerated, because at one time it was a classic deal. It is nothing like it used to be. The hotels and the downtown gambling places who gave their money to build the floats decided that it wasn't worth it. Then some of the downtown gambling places said that they couldn't support it, because all of the acts and things on Fremont Street took the gamblers out of the casinos. It was just about the time, 1967, that the legislature passed the law which allowed corporation gambling here. As far as the corporations were concerned, most of them have their headquarters in New York City or Chicago or Miami or someplace like that. They just weren't interested. There's been a definite change not only in the Helldorado but in a lot of other things. The corporations couldn't care less about the local people.

The first establishment on the Strip that made any headway at all was the El Rancho, which was built by Tommy Hull. Tommy Hull was a California motel and hotel man. He had motels in Sacramento, Fresno and Bakersfield, I believe. And he had a couple of hotels down in Los Angeles.

*Was he a gambling man?*

Not at the time; not when he first came up here. He was completely clean of that.

Tommy came up here and he saw the benefits that might come from the building of a motel. I think his wife told me that he had sent a front man up here to make surveys of the area and to see what the possibility of the future was. And he decided that he would put a motel here in Las Vegas. When he started his motel, several of his friends that he had made here in Las Vegas, like Cliff Jones, said, "Why don't you build a casino building?" There were several other people, but I can't remember . . . . Everybody knew everybody else in Las Vegas in 1940.

He was going to build his motel here as a rest stop between Salt Lake and Los Angeles. He built the swimming pool up right up next to the highway. This was advertising the coolness of the water. People would stop to take a shower or go swimming, or whatever. His friends convinced him that the best thing that he could do was to build a casino—separate building entirely—out of the swimming pool: a casino and a restaurant. His friend said, "Build your casino and your entertainment spot in the front, and build cabanas around it." He did that, and the hotel was very successful from the start.

The people of Las Vegas looked at where he was building his motel and they said, "He's too far out of town. He will never make a go of it."

*Do you know why he picked that particular place?*

No. I think it was the largest piece of land owned by one person, and he only had to deal with one person.

*Who did he buy it from, do you know?*

I'm not sure whether it was H. F. M. & M. [Ham, Ferron, Martin & Mildren] which is a conglomerate of a bunch of attorneys here.

[Mildren was a physician.—ed.] It may have been them, but I'm not sure who it was.

*Do you know how he financed the motel?*

Oh, I think he was pretty well able to finance anything that he did.

*It wasn't done locally, as far as you know?*

So far as I know, no.

*Was Hull a friend of Ed Clark's?*

Not when he first came here. Tommy came in here cold. It was something of a surprise to everybody in Las Vegas that he was going to develop the El Rancho.

*How did people react to his decision?*

They'd been waiting for a resort hotel for 40 years, and they thought that this was the best offer that they've had, and they greeted it very well. But they were skeptical, because it was clear out of town.

*Do you remember what the hotel looked like?*

Yes, the dining room and the gambling casino were in this separate building, which had a windmill on top of it. That was apparently the signature of his buildings in California. So he was carrying on . . . .

*Was this hotel luxurious? What sort of accommodations?*

Well, luxurious in the sense of the 1940s, yes. It was built more on the western style. The dining room was built sort of in the form of a corral, with the dance hall being the center of the corral. It was quite nice.

Garwood Van, who still is in Las Vegas now, brought in the first bigtime dance band. He came up to stay for 2 weeks, and he's been here for 30 years. Tommy had a gal by the name of Maxine Lewis. Maxine Lewis is the one who was the entertainment director. During her brief tenure at the El Rancho, she set the tempo, or the programming, for the acts that were in use up until 1960, I guess. She would have a singer, a standing comedian and then the star of the show with dance girls. That's the way the program developed in a lot of the hotels.

After they convinced him that he ought to put in a gambling casino, Tommy figured that was a pretty good deal, and he did a lot of publicity stuff. You couldn't go out to El Rancho, if you knew Tommy very well, and buy dinner. He'd always comp the dinners. He'd camp the dinners for writers from Los Angeles, from the East . . . . He was certainly a man after getting a lot of publicity. Of course, being the only one in Las Vegas . . . . It was Los Angeles and Hollywood that finally discovered Las Vegas.

*Did he have a Hollywood connection?*

Oh, yes. He owned the Hollywood Hotel. I think it's now the Hollywood Roosevelt, and he had another one down there. He was quite well-known in the hotel business all over the world. El Rancho was a place that they could come to. The directors could bring their secretaries up here, and nobody would ever know anything about it. It was a haven for fun.

*Was it frequented by locals, as well?*

Oh, yes. It was just a stream of people. When they were having parties or bridal ceremonies or anything, they'd go to El Rancho and stage them.

*When did it become apparent that this was going to be a success? Did it become successful right away?*

Yes, definitely. As I say, it was too far out of town. It was out where the Sahara is now, on Sahara Avenue, and you know how far out of town Sahara Avenue is at the present time—about 10 blocks.

*When Hull got underway and El Rancho seemed to be doing well, did people envision any other development?*

Well, the people didn't envision it. But R. E. Griffith, a Texas and Arkansas movie magnate—who had a lot of movie houses in the Texas and Arkansas area, he moved in and built his hotel—the Last Frontier. He started, I believe, about the time that Tommy finished his hotel. Griffith finished it and opened it. Everybody was enthused, but they said, "One motel like Hull's will go, but 2 won't. The other one will go broke."

Generally, I think Hull welcomed the competition, because it made them both work harder to bring in more stage shows and stuff of that sort. I mean, they were not enemies or anything. They visited at the same parties that were given and were congenial. Tommy was a very congenial guy. He'd get along with everybody.

The flow from Hollywood and from Los Angeles started to pick up, because they could come up here over a weekend and enjoy themselves. That was about the time that they had the blood tests for marriage in California, so they'd come up here. There were hundreds of movie people who came up here for marriages. I can remember that I was best man for Fred MacMurray, Buck Jones and . . . I can't think of those others. The hotels began to build marriage chapels

and wedding chapels. That was when the top blew off the volcano.

*Did R. E. Griffith have any connections here in Las Vegas?*

No.

*He wasn't related to Bob Griffith?*

No.

*How did R. E. Griffith come here?*

I am not sure. I think his nephew, Bill Moore, came up here and saw the opportunity that was here. He talked his uncle into building the motel.

I knew all these people—Hull, Bill Moore, Griffith . . . I was practically buddies with them. I'd go out to the Last Frontier and stay out there and have a couple of beers and everything and talk it over with Bill Moore to find out what he was doing and how he was getting along. I didn't know Griffith very well. Griffith only came back to Las Vegas once in a while.

Moore was the one who built the Last Frontier hotel. He was the architect for it, and he built the building. The gambling area that was there across the front of the lot, and it contained the registration area and the dining room area and the Carillo Room, named after the Hollywood movie star Leo Carillo. The Horn Room, which was the bar room, was decorated all over with cattle horns. That was the main area. Upstairs they had rooms. On the south side of the building there were other rooms and provisions. Then they built on an annex out in back to the west. It was built in a western style, and it had as its model the Old West in modern times. That was carried out very well. He had the Frontier Village—it's still

out there—in which he bought up a lot of old Nevada relics, like a Chinese joss house and an old theater and things of the olden days. Mr. Griffith died before he could get that finished.

Bill was the actual manager of the hotel. He was most interested in seeing that the hotel was clean and that the guests were taken care of properly. The service was just perfect. You couldn't ask for any better service than you'd get there. It was still in the western style. He brought some Zuni Indians from Arizona or New Mexico. They put in a lot of stonework in the dining room and the dance floor and the entertainment room that was just beautiful. They had chandeliers hanging from the ceiling.

Their entertainment was as good as you could get anywhere in the United States. Moore's entertainment director was Maxine Lewis, who had started at the El Rancho. Maxine Lewis was very definitely the queen of the Strip, because she brought in new people for the showroom. Afterwards, they became big shots—Liberace, Sammy Davis, Phil Spitagni and his all-girl orchestra and people like that. The first time that Liberace appeared in Las Vegas he got \$2,500. You couldn't buy a pair of his shoe laces for \$500 now. I think that was about 1940, as I think it was just before the war. Maxine Lewis introduced these people to the world through the showroom here. If you could perform at the Hotel Last Frontier, you had it made as an entertainer.

Maxine is the sister of "Mousie" Powell, who married the actor, William Powell. Maxine was a dancing girl; I think she was in one of the show lines. Maxine was working for Tommy Hull at the El Rancho. I don't know how long Hull'd known her, but he hired her as his director of entertainment. When Griffith offered her a job at the Last Frontier, she resigned and went there. She stayed there for years.

Bill had a man by the name of Ballard Barron, who was in charge of the gambling. Bill left the gambling to him. In the latter years of his life, Bill became interested in gambling—not in gambling itself, but the control of gambling.

*What kind of clientele would frequent the Last Frontier?*

Oh, all kinds. I don't know how to describe them . . . You had to show some signs of class before you got into that place. Not people who would come in Levis and dirty shirts and stuff of that sort. It was a very fine family hotel. The Rotary Club met there in the Canary Room; the Kiwanis met there; all the bridge parties that the women had were held there, and birthday parties. There was no place like the Last Frontier.

*Would you say that it outstripped Tommy Hull's establishment?*

Oh, yes, yes. Bill Moore was one of the most avid go-getters that I've known. He became one of the power structure. They just would put more burden on him, and he'd complete it and do the job. He just climbed the stairs. He became so big in the city that he was elected president of the Chamber of Commerce for 2 terms. He was into everything and promoted anything and everything that the Chamber of Commerce wanted to do. His publicity flats were always available for the community when they needed them. He just had more ideas in 15 minutes than anybody else had in 2 days. He had ideas of putting on entertainment that they've got now out at Wet and Wild—amusement parks and the thing that they've got there just off the highway, the miniature golf course. He was very interested in making his hotel a family hotel.



Bill went up to Reno and wanted to build a sort of a steamboat casino on the Truckee River, and they fought him. The people of Reno fought him and wouldn't let him have a chance. They didn't want to grow! They weren't interested in having somebody from the outside coming in and telling them what to do. The thing is that Las Vegas wanted to support anybody who would come in here and build a resort hotel or build whatever. When Tommy Hull and Bill Moore got their 2 hotels going, the community was just ecstatic, because they could see that this was the beginning.

*What made Griffith and Moore believe that there was going to be enough trade for another LA highway resort?*

They were just visionary, I guess. They could see beyond their noses, which was something that the majority of the people in Las Vegas couldn't do. Had the people of the city of Las Vegas known what was going to be done, you'd see a lot of millionaires walking around, because they could've sold that land for whatever they're selling it for now.

*Before these people came in, no one thought of the Los Angeles highway as a potential market for tourism?*

I wouldn't say no one. There were people who believed that Las Vegas was going to grow and the highway would be one of the reasons that would work. As I told you, I think we 'built' about 9 hotels in the *Review-Journal*, and none of them came through.

*When their hotels were built, did Moore and Hull have any trouble getting materials?*

No, this was before the war.

*Was there any concern at the time that there might be gas shortages?*

No, because nobody paid too much attention . . . The war was over in Germany. We weren't fighting the Japs at that time.

*What happened to the Last Frontier?*

I think it was after the war, they were doing some construction work out there, and Griffith was up here at the time. He fell into one of the construction ditches and injured himself, and he died from those injuries. He was the only one of the Griffith family who was interested at all in the hotel business. All their business was in theater. Bill Moore fought the brothers (I think Griffith had 3 brothers) to keep it going, but they couldn't see it, and they sold it. I've forgotten who they sold it to. I think it was in the 1950s. To show you what the new owners thought of the Last Frontier: they had all this beautiful stonework in the Ramona Room. That was the big dance floor and entertainment room. They painted it over with pink paint and just ruined the whole thing! To my estimation, it's just gone downhill ever since.

The Last Frontier and the El Rancho had a different clientele. I can't tell you why it was different, but it seemed that the Last Frontier had a higher-type clientele than the El Rancho did. The El Rancho changed hands several times after Tommy left. They didn't do a very good job of taking care of it, and it burned down. That was about in 1959 or 1960 . . . I'm not sure.

*We know what gambling is like in the big Strip hotels now. How was it in these more intimate settings?*

It was a small gambling operation. They weren't making millions of dollars. They



were making thousands of dollars. They all used silver dollars, because nobody with a thousand silver dollars in a sack can run very fast. The customer was treated like the king. I mean, they would comp him the same way they do with these high rollers now, and they had a credit line and so forth. But in those days we didn't have so much of this greed and outlaw business. I guess there have been maybe 1 or 2 robberies in a casino.

*Did they have any problems of fraud or theft in these early casinos?*

No, because their employees were screened very, very delicately.

*Did they hire locals to work in the casinos?*

Yes, mostly locals until the Flamingo was built.

*I have read that Ed Clark opposed financing the Last Frontier. Do you know anything about that?*

Ed Clark opposed any development his bank would have to loan money on. I don't know why. It was that old-time banking industry, I guess. This is said in Ed's favor: that he had been a small-time banker. Most of the time he put in the Clark Forwarding Company, which was a trucking business between here and the mines of Tonopah, Goldfield, Rhyolite. And his vision extended about as far as from here to Beatty—that was his world. He didn't want anything. He was a lot like the people of Reno. He was afraid that if the town grew and all of that, he'd lose the power that he had. Ed Clark had had a monopoly and was very satisfied that he did. He wouldn't let it go without having a fight. This is not saying anything bad about Ed

Clark, but Ed Clark was not a forward-looking man. I think that I'm the first guy that's come forth with guts enough to say so.

Nobody could talk to Ed Clark about money. You had to have gold behind you before he'd ever lend you any money. If you didn't have \$5,000 behind you, he wouldn't lend you any money. Ed was very, very conservative—ultra-conservative. He wasn't very farsighted, as far as his bank was concerned. Everybody could see the vision, could see what was going to happen and knew just exactly why it wasn't happening, because he was not interested in lending any money. It was not a very happy thought. There were a lot of things that were turned down that could have been built here. I can't remember them separately. I can remember a lot of developers coming in here and talking to me over at the Review-Journal and asking me what the dickens was wrong with Ed Clark, and I'd say, "Why?"

They said, "Well, he's not interested in developing anything in the City."

*Did your brother ever try to convince him?*

I don't know. My brother was as enthusiastic as I was. Everybody was frustrated—all of the swingers and the shakers.

*Did this cause any friction or disagreements with some of the more adventurous members of the Chamber of Commerce?*

Yes. There were several banks that were suggested to take over or help out, and one of them was set up. It was the Nevada State Bank, I believe. That was about the late thirties or early forties. But, really, as far as local financing was concerned, it was never available until Valley Bank opened. We were very happy when Parry Thomas and his

group came in and established what is now the Valley Bank. It was after the war. Until Valley Bank came in here, there was no way that you could get any financing in Las Vegas for building anything. [Mr. Cahlan informs me that some people secured loans from insurance companies. This is how he financed one of his own houses.—ed.]

*Do you know whether Ed Clark worked actively against other banks coming in?*

I am not sure about that, but when he died, they sold his bank to the Bank of America, and they broke up all the holdings that he had: the telephone company, power, general utilities. Ed just faded out of the picture in the last 5 years that he was alive.

*Do you know where Moore and Griffith went for financing?*

I think Griffith probably picked his up in Texas, and Tommy Hull, as I say, had a good reputation in California. He could pick up money down there pretty well.

*After Ed Clark saw these hotels succeeding, did his attitude toward financing them change?*

Not much. I don't think that he wanted to provide any money for gambling. He'd just say, "I don't want to get into gambling." I don't know whether it was a bad risk or whether it was the connotation of gambling in a bank.

The first time that I met Benny (Bugsy) Siegel was at a Chamber of Commerce meeting at the Biltmore Hotel, which was down at the corner of Bonanza and Main Street. He came in to make the announcement that he was going to build a hotel. I think it was announced that National Distilleries,

which was the regime that was honest after Prohibition . . . They'd made this National Distilleries as their front place, and it was they that underwrote the Flamingo Hotel. In later years, while he was here, Benny and I became very good friends. [Benjamin Siegel arrived in Las Vegas in 1942. His Flamingo hotel-casino was completed in 1946, and in 1947 he was the victim of an apparent mob assassination.—ed.]

I used to go up to a massage parlor—not the kind they've got now. This was a real massage parlor. It was run by a guy by the name of Lenny Shafer. I used to go up there once a week to get a massage and get a sun bath. Benny came in, and I recalled to him that I had been up at the Chamber meeting. So we'd meet each other up there when I'd go up to the massage parlor.

Benny was very, very fastidious. He just couldn't stand any blemish on his skin. He used to tell Lenny, his masseur, that he wanted that out of there. I can't help but think that if Benny had seen the last picture that was taken of him with his eye hanging out on his cheek where he had been shot, he would have died anyway, because, as I say, he was very fastidious.

In the building of the massage parlor, there was an off-track layoff betting system. It handled millions of dollars worth of bets. Bookmakers around the United States would call in to this place in the massage parlor, and they would take care of the layoff of bets to other places, so that nobody would go broke. I got to know those people: Benny Goffstein and Al . . . I can't remember his last name. Benny used to come up and play cards with some of the local people, and we'd sit around and talk. I became quite well acquainted with him.

*At what time did you realize that he did have mob connections?*

Oh, 6 months after he was here. I made it a point to find out who he was through the United Press.

*Did you expose this in the local news?*

No. I'd've had my head chopped off. He was going to build another hotel! The city of Las Vegas was completely behind Siegel when he came in here to build his hotel, because it was at a time when things were booming and one more would just pile more wood on the fire. Anything that would help to build the city of Las Vegas, I was completely behind. The thing of it is that Las Vegas at the time was an open city. I think that it was generally conceded, and I spread the reports that Las Vegas was an open city. All of these mobsters who would get themselves in trouble back East and in the Middle West or in Florida would come here. They were safe, because no bloodshed in Las Vegas. Anytime that anybody was marked for a hit man, they were hit in Phoenix or Santa Monica. You notice Siegel wasn't killed in Las Vegas; he was killed in Santa Monica . . . Gus Greenbaum was killed in Phoenix. [Greenbaum was operator of the Riviera Hotel.—ed.]

*How was that kind of deal struck?*

Oh, that was one among the mob itself. The word was put out that that was it.

*How widely known by people in Las Vegas was Siegel's mob connection?*

That was the start of all of this business that's going on now: that the gamblers got in here, and the mob got in here and were doing this and doing that. I don't think the general population knew about it until the Flamingo was finished, anyway.

*But you knew about it before and you chose not to publicize this.*

Well, there was too much other news going on in the nation, and that was just one item. I don't remember that it was deliberately kept out. You'd get United Press stories over the wire that it was Ben Siegel.

*According to the oral history that you did with Mary Ellen Glass, one of the county commissioners opposed Siegel's licensing. Do you remember that?*

Oh, yes. Very definitely. That was what was holding up the opening of the hotel. The commission said they wanted to know more about Mr. Siegel before they'd give him the license.

*Was that because they suspected problems in his background?*

I think this was true, but the guy who was holding out on it was a Mormon. I know the name very well, but I'm not going to tell you. [laughter] The Mormons are not in favor of gambling or liquor. I asked Benny if he wanted to get his license, and he said he sure did. And I said, "All right. I'll arrange a meeting with the guy that's fighting it." So I arranged a meeting between the county commissioner and Benny. After about half, or three-quarters of an hour, Benny came back to the massage parlor.

He said, "I got it."

*What do you think Siegel said that changed this man's mind?*

It wasn't what he said. It was his actions. He took out a billfold. I don't know definitely. But all of a sudden a man goes into a room with the guy that's very definitely opposed to

his license. When he came out of the room, it was OK. I didn't stay in the room. I didn't want any part of it. I don't have any concrete evidence, and Benny never told me anything about it.

*Did Siegel live in Las Vegas and run the hotel?*

He lived in Las Vegas, yes. They had quite a few of the mobsters who were operating tables. There was a real big scam that the skimming had been going on ever since the hotel opened. It was pretty well known—not only in the town of Las Vegas, but in all of the United States—that the mob was into the Flamingo.

People were afraid that the publicity that was given on Bugsy Siegel would scare all the people out of here, because they wouldn't want to come around when there were mobsters around. But I took the other tack. I said, "Look, these people are coming to Las Vegas to have a good time. If they've got a bunch of mobsters up here who have got pistol holsters under their arms, they want to see them! They'll come up here just to see them, like a wax museum!" I wasn't frightened, and I still am not.

*Did other people in town share this attitude of yours?*

Some of them did, but the majority of them were scared that the mob was violating their privacy.

*How was the Flamingo different from the existing Strip hotels?*

It was the glamour spot of the Strip, to start with. They had flamingos all around, and the interior was very, very beautifully decorated. It was the start of the glamour hotels.

Siegel was most interested in the joint making money, so he did everything he could to get the money in the safe. Gambling was his angle. And it was the first hotel that put in shopping places.

*What kind of clientele frequented the Flamingo?*

Very, very good. When they opened the Flamingo, I think that it was the biggest opening that they'd had in any of the hotels that had opened before. They had movie stars and glamour gals and everybody from the movies.

*He catered to this Hollywood group more than any of the others had?*

Oh, yes. And he catered to the gaming people. Of course, he had the in, because his boys knew who the high rollers were. I think they were the first ones who would bring them in by airplane and camp them. Then they'd stay around the hotel and gamble.

*Did you ever suspect that these mobsters were trying to launder money?*

Well, at that time we didn't know what laundering money was. But there isn't any doubt that that's what it did.

*Was Siegel present in the Flamingo on a daily basis? Would you often see him if you went there?*

He would just wander around the hotel and be there. If he was sitting in the hotel, he'd always be sifting around where he could see the gambling table.

*What kind of security would he have to protect his interests in gambling? Was he more security conscious than . . . ?*

No, I don't think he was. I think he was pretty well shielded by the National Distilleries, because they had a big investment out there. He was the guy who was supposed to run it, and I think that's why he got shot. The story that I heard would convince me that Benny just didn't know which pocket belonged to him and which belonged to the mob. I don't think that there's any doubt in the world but there was skimming over there.

There was a man by the name of Moe Sedway who was supposed to be the bagman for Siegel and the operators of the Flamingo Hotel. He was on his way to Florida with a bag full of money—skimming probably. He died enroute to Florida; apparently he had a heart attack. And whether it was brought on by something that was going on . . . because his death preceded Siegel's by about 6 months.

*What kind of publicity did Las Vegas get out of the Flamingo and Ben Siegel?*

Well, good and bad. I mean, everybody who came up here was interested in who was running the Flamingo Hotel and wanted to get their picture taken alongside him if he'd allow it. That's the kind of publicity that went out. It was bad, sure, but, as I say, it attracted more people than it had detracted. We were in the gambling business when he came here. There wasn't any doubt about it. If some guy made 120 passes on the crap table, and won \$15,000 or something, that information would go out.

*And you used the paper, then, to advance this as sort of publicity for the city?*

Yes, sure. We were the publicity agents for the Chamber of Commerce, and I don't mind saying that, because we not only made the community grow, but we also made the newspaper grow.

*When Siegel was finally murdered—a very violent death—did this give anyone in the community cause for concern? Were they alarmed at this point?*

Most of the people who were alarmed at the shooting of Benny Siegel were the people who worked out at the Flamingo, because their boss who was the head man was gone, and they didn't know what was going to happen. We took it for granted that these guys [the mob] were going to kill each other sooner or later, [laughter] because they could never get along. And we knew that they would not be killed in Las Vegas. There's more fear about the gamblers today than there was when the Flamingo was first opened.

*When Siegel was killed, was there any revival of anti-gaming sentiment in the community?*

They accepted the fact that the dream had been realized: that now we were on our way as a resort community. The Flamingo gave us more national and international publicity because of Benny Siegel.

*The next major hotel was Wilbur Clark's Desert Inn.*

Yes, it was after the war. He started that thing and ran out of money about 3 times. If I am informed correctly, Wilbur Clark was a bellhop in San Diego. He had no mob connections so far as I could find out when he came. He developed those after he got here.

*Do you know how that came about?*

Well, he just didn't know where to go to get any money to complete the hotel, and so he went to . . . I think it was the Cleveland Mounds gang that financed his hotel.



*You don't know anything about the actual connection, whether they came to him, or he went to them?*

Well, I don't know. I think it was a mutual agreement sort of thing.

*Was this connection widely known?*

Oh, yes. The Flamingo had opened up a lot of pipelines. It opened up pipelines to Las Vegas from the mob. And we had some sources in the mob that Las Vegas could hit every once in a while for money, as long as we didn't uncloth them. If somebody out at the Flamingo knew somebody at the Desert Inn who knew me, and it had come down this way, and if I wanted information, they'd talk to me. There was very little that was put down on paper.

*Was Clark's connection to the Cleveland mob ever covered in the paper?*

I think we wrote a story about it, yes. We acknowledged the fact that the mob was here.

*I want to ask you about a few people who were connected with Wilbur Clark: Moe Dalitz.*

He was in the Desert Inn. Moe Dalitz was a member of a mob and became one of the finest philanthropists in the community. He has done a million dollars worth of work, but nobody knows anything about it. He was with the Red Cross and the boys clubs, Variety Club.

*How do you know that he went straight?*

Oh, I know the things that he's done. I talked with him. We used to sit and talk for hours. He was just on his own out here, and that was the way he liked it. I never talked to

him about his days with the mob. The thing of it is that, as I tell you, you could come to Las Vegas, and if you were big enough and strong enough and didn't step on somebody else's toes, you could go as far as you liked. And Moe Dalitz was one of those sort of guys. If there ever was one guy who became a good citizen out of the mobs, he's it. He was just a real good Nevada citizen. He was very active until his eyes went bad. I see him every once in a while. He's got the same thing that I got. [Mr. Cahlan suffers from a condition causing blindness.—ed.]

*How about Morris Kleinman, Sammy Tucker, Thomas McGinty? Do you know those names?*

Yes, very well. Kleinman was a son of a bitch. Excuse me. He was with one of the mobs. I'm not sure . . . there was the Detroit Purple Gang and the Cleveland Mounds gang, and I've forgotten who belonged to which one. Kleinman was very, very hard to deal with. I didn't know him too well. The things that I learned I learned by secondhand information, so perhaps I shouldn't comment too much on him. But he wasn't liked too much among the local people.

Sam Tucker was in the Desert Inn, and he was with that mob. I think it was the Cleveland mob. He lived in Las Vegas for quite some time. Thomas McGinty was sort of a gofer guy, as far as people here were concerned. When they had an errand to do: you go for a thousand dollars out of the bank or you go someplace else.

*I think there was an investigation of the Desert Inn when they were seeking a license. This was under Robbins Cahill. Do you know anything about that?*

I don't know anything about that, except the investigation was made. Apparently they



couldn't turn up anything that was of any bad nature, so they gave it to him.

*How did you feel about the licensing of the Desert Inn?*

It was one more hotel. It was a funny thing about Wilbur Clark: when the mob took over, Wilbur Clark became the front man, because he had a good reputation in the city of Las Vegas and also around the community.

*As a hotel, what was the Desert Inn like?*

It was another glamour joint. It was really fabulous. They had done a very fine job on the interior. And he had hired—I don't know whether he did it or the hotel did it—a flack man by the name of Gene Murphy. Gene Murphy was one of the best publicity men that I've ever known. Whenever there were any of these events like the Kentucky Derby or a pro-football game or championship boxing—any of those events—Gene Murphy always saw that Wilbur Clark's face was on the front page of the newspaper that was being published in the community where the event was held. That's the way Gene Murphy operated. The Desert Inn for quite some time was known as "Wilbur Clark's Desert Inn." There were three publicity men who probably did more for the city of Las Vegas than any other three men in the city: one of them was Gene Murphy; one was Al Freeman, who was on the Sands; and the other one was Neil Regan, who took over as project director for Hannigan when he was in here to publicize Las Vegas.

*What was the focus of the Desert Inn? Was it gambling? Was it similar to the Flamingo in that way?*

Oh, it was glamour. Everybody would have to see the Desert Inn before they got out

of town. Gambling was certainly the focus, because that was the focus of all the hotels.

*Did he cater to the Hollywood crowd?*

Not necessarily. Not as much as Siegel did.

*Was the Desert Inn popular with the locals?*

Oh, yes.

*In reading Robbins Cahill's oral history, I found that he said Las Vegas did get very jittery after the Cleveland mob connection was known. Does this agree with your perceptions?*

Well, they were exercised. I never found anybody who was jittery because of the Cleveland mob. I don't know how many people know that this was the open city, and this was one of the reasons that I had no desire whatsoever to break down the hotels and who owned them. It was the situation of being more interested in building the community, rather than ranting and raving about something I knew wasn't going to happen. Of course, Robbins Cahill was in with the Tax Commission, and he knew more about it than I did. I wouldn't doubt that he would have different ideas than I did. There might have been some worries as far as the Flamingo gang was concerned.

*Does it surprise you that there wasn't more organized opposition to gambling as these things developed? Isn't it interesting that the Mormons, say, didn't get more exercised over gambling as these mob connections became known?*

People have to understand that, as far as the residents of the city of Las Vegas

were concerned, they were overwhelmed by the possibilities of Las Vegas becoming the gaming capital of the world—the entertainment capital of the world, and they didn't care who put it on! As more people came in here, land values would be raised. There were a lot of Las Vegas people who made a great deal of money.

*Did anyone worry that the gangs would take more out of Las Vegas than they brought in? In other words, that they would come here, use Las Vegas and then ship the profits away from the town, making them unavailable?*

That's where your skimming came out. We were perfectly happy to help the investigators who came in with investigating this skimming, because they were taking more money out of here, as you say, than they left here. It developed from the Flamingo. I mean, when Bugsy came in here that was the end of honest operation.

*Could you tell me about Fremont Street in the 1940s?*

Most of the places down there were sawdust joints—sawdust on the floor instead of carpets. There was no glamour downtown. The Golden Nugget, I guess, was the most elaborate that they had. There was the Frontier Club and the Pioneer Club and the Las Vegas Club. The Mint wasn't there in the 1940s. The Golden Nugget was just a pure gambling place and so were the Pioneer and the Frontier.

Most of the development of Fremont came from outside developers. There was no gang money that was put into downtown Las Vegas. All the investment that was made in downtown Las Vegas was made locally with Los Angeles money. The guys who put the deal together—the Pioneer and the Frontier,

and then they built the Golden Nugget—were Guy McAfee and Farmer Paige. They were from Los Angeles. Guy McAfee was a vice officer under Frank Shaw, who was mayor of Los Angeles. Frank Shaw was rather a mobster himself, and he put Guy McAfee in charge of the vice in Los Angeles. Farmer Paige was the slot machine king. I think it was Tutor Scheer—one or the other—was in charge of prostitution. They had a recall of Shaw—it was about 1940 . . . maybe in the late 1930s. McAfee and the rest of Shaw's boys were looking for some place to light, and they came up here and built the Golden Nugget. They took over the Beckley Building, which was on the corner of First and Fremont, and named it the Pioneer Club. They took over the place . . . I think it was Adcock and Ronnow's place on Fremont Street and made the Frontier out of that. And that was the start of the development of downtown. [The Frontier on Fremont Street should not be confused with Bill Moore's hotel Last Frontier on the Los Angeles highway.—ed.]

I guess the first person who became interested in the development of Las Vegas was Bob Griffith. His father owned the place where the Golden Nugget is now, on the corner of Second and Fremont. [Mr. Cahlan is referring to Steve Wynn's Golden Nugget.—ed.] McAfee leased the place over a long-term lease . . . not a good price.

*But Bob Griffith wasn't a casino man?*

No. Bob Griffith was the main pusher of the Chamber of Commerce.

*Did local people frequent these Fremont Street establishments?*

Oh, yes. They'd go in and gamble. They were all sawdust joints. Nobody took much interest in them. They started to clean up

after the war and after the boom started. They could see it was coming. There isn't any doubt in the world but what Steve Wynn has changed the face of downtown Las Vegas.

*Was there rivalry between the Strip and Fremont Street?*

Oh, yes, there was rivalry, because they didn't agree on a lot of things. One of the things was that during the 1940s at the Helldorado, the Strip hotels were seeing how they could outdo each other by building floats to put into the Helldorado parade. They go \$40,000, \$50,000 for floats, and the downtown people couldn't compete with that sort of stuff. It was more or less of an economic situation. There were several other things. I can't call them to mind right now, but there were several other things that happened out there on the Strip and downtown that neither one of them liked. There was never any outright rivalry, but it was just sort of an underground deal.

I think it's rather ironic that the hotels that first opened up on the Strip—the El Rancho, the Last Frontier and, I think, the Flamingo—wouldn't allow slot machines in their casinos. Now, slot machines are paying the biggest amount of interest on their loans. The people who opened the 3 original hotels here were going after the wealthier type of people, and they didn't want the nickel and dime players. Milton Prell, who came here from Portland, was the first one to bring slot machines onto the Strip. He opened the Bingo Palace where the Sahara is now and installed slot machines.

*What about the bus trade?*

That's one of the reasons that they didn't put in the slot machines. They didn't want to

attract that type of people. They were after what now are called high rollers. They didn't want the sawdust trail people in there.

When the gambling ordinances were passed here, the city commission allowed slot machines anywhere. Of course, there weren't any large gambling establishments downtown. There were some like the Northern Club that had slot machines, but you usually found them in meat markets and grocery stores. They would attract the people who got change from their purchases. They'd drop 2 or 3 quarters and nickels, dimes in the slot machines as they walked out the door. Most of the slot machine business was downtown. Now, at all of these grocery stores and all of those places, you'll see the slot machines just jammed up with people waiting to play them. The slot machines usually pay the rent or the lease for these types of businesses.

It was my idea, when the city commission was discussing the ordinance, that the slot machines should not be allowed in any place other than the gambling establishments that had the machine gambling. But they wrote the ordinance so that they could be anywhere in the city.

In those days I was usually sitting in on the city commission meetings. A lot of times they'd ask me for advice and what I thought about it. I explained to them just what would happen as far as the downtown was concerned: people would get change and drop it in the slot machines and would take ice cream cones or something away from their kids. That's how the slot machine operation developed. Now, they've got these electronic devices—poker games and other electronic devices. You go to a slot machine area in any of the places on the Strip, and the electronic devices are all busy, and the other machines are not being used too much.

The commission believed—and I guess they were correct—that licensing the slot machines would pay a great deal into the city coffers. The community was growing and there wasn't too much money in the city treasury. It was shortly after the gambling bills were passed. Now, the slot machines are everywhere. I regret that. In a way, yes, because I still think that a lot of these people who are on welfare will go down to these various stores and get change in coins and go over and sit and play the slot machines. The people who are not as wealthy as some of the rest of these people, it doesn't do them any good. Those slot machines attract a lot of business. They've got electronic devices in the grocery stores and all barbershops now, and pretty soon they'll be putting them in telephone booths, I guess. I never thought that it was a good idea to put the slot machines in any place where kids were allowed. I thought it was bringing up the kids on breaking in on the gambling business. They'd see their mothers or fathers playing the slot machines, and when they grew up, they, naturally, couldn't wait. When they got old enough, they could play the slot machines.

*Bill Moore was an active participant when the state Tax Commission was made responsible for regulating gambling in Nevada in 1945. Do you know anything about that?*

We just took it for granted that it was in good hands and let it go at that. When they suggested it at the first place, it seemed to be about the only thing that could be done. The Tax Commission would be the ones to collect the taxes. After the thing was operating for quite some time, it was found out that the Tax Commission was not the proper place to do it. The people in the Tax Commission didn't know too much about gambling. That wasn't

their forte. Their operation was to tax cattle and things of that sort.

*I believe that Bill Moore served on the Tax Commission as a representative from the hotel and casino community. Did you ever talk with him about that?*

Oh, often. He saw that this wasn't the way to do it—on the Tax Commission, and he explained to me that it wasn't their cup of tea.

*When he was put on the Tax Commission as a representative from the gambling and hotel community, I've read that some people believed that this wasn't proper, because he was an owner himself. Did you see any conflict . . . ?*

No. I thought that that helped him out being a good operator of the Tax Commission. If you have a man with the integrity that Bill Moore had, he could have been the operator of 7 hotels, and I would still say that he would make a good man on the Tax Commission. He knew the operation of a gambling casino, and he had the integrity. There wasn't anybody who could buy Bill Moore off. No way! Bill was also in the gambling commission. I think he was chairman for a couple of years.

*As a matter of principle, for the future, did you ever think that a member of the Tax Commission should be someone who didn't own any interest in gambling? Did that occur to you?*

That seemed to me to be a silly idea. Who else on the Tax Commission knew what the gambling taxes were and how they were collected and what they did with them after they got them? If you've got gambling as a statute, then be sure that it's protected by

having somebody who knows the gambling business to assess the taxes on it!

*Do you know how important those early revenues became to the state?*

They helped out, but they didn't make any great inroads on the finance.

*Some people have argued that when the state stepped in to regulate and tax gambling, that this had the effect of tying the Nevada economy to gambling even more tightly. Do you agree with that?*

Sure! It's the only way it could operate. There was some worry that perhaps the gambling economy would fall off, but it's done nothing but grow. It is amazing to me: when Nevada passed the gambling law, we were the bastard child. We should have been kicked out of the union. There was a big furor, and it lasted for maybe 5 or 6 years. And now look what's happened. How many of these states are into lotteries? Is that gambling? We were the advance guard.

We were worried here for a while that gambling was dropping off, and what would we do without gambling? Everybody said that if we didn't have gambling, we'd dry up and blow away. But the thing that they didn't realize is that as far as the economy of Clark County is concerned, you've got Nellis Air Force Base, Basic Magnesium, the test site and Boulder Dam. Now, any one of those four things would be welcome into any other community like Las Vegas that was looking for industry of a type that would bring workers in. The economy of the city of Las Vegas is not completely tied up to gambling. Of course, we'd be in a little rough deal if gambling was ever taken away. But, I think

we could make it. If gambling was voted out tomorrow, we still would have operations that would keep the community going, not as good as it is now, but it would maintain some sort of a semblance of a city.

Now, some economists have told me that when a community gets to a population of 250,000 or 500,000, it eats off itself. There's the population that's here to generate enough industry or economy or what have you to maintain the community. However, if gambling was voted out we would have an awful tough battle to keep abreast of what we've got now, because you've got investments that have been made by the community in your water, your sewer, your electricity and everything that goes along with the growth of the community. That would be more or less of . . . not a white elephant, but not as good as it is now.





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## THE KEFAUVER COMMITTEE HEARINGS AND THE REGULATION OF CASINO GAMBLING

*The Kefauver Committee came into Las Vegas in 1951. Senator Estes Kefauver conducted a series of hearings in which he looked into criminal activities in a number of cities. What was the impetus behind those hearings?*

As far as we were concerned, we were perfectly willing to have them investigate the hotels as they were. Several of the hotel operators were down at the Federal Building ready to testify. Kefauver closed the session after the first day. That's as far as he went. All of the gamblers were down there to be questioned. Kefauver apparently found out that he couldn't get what he wanted, so he left after one day, period. It was a very, very skimpy investigation. I think Kefauver was running for president. There's no doubt about it.

I think that Kefauver's original intention was to investigate criminal activity on a national scale, but if he conducted his hearings in the manner that he did in Las Vegas, he accomplished very little. I think that the hearings were revolving around the mob. The mobs had gone into legitimate business,

but they were still using mob tactics. I think that the investigation, had it been conducted correctly, would have done a lot of good. It might have cut down on the crime that we have now.

*Might it have hurt Las Vegas in that it might have exposed more criminal connections here?*

I don't think so, because as far as Las Vegas was concerned, it was an open city. There was no crime supposed to be done in the city of Las Vegas, because this was a hiding place; they could come here and hide until the dust blew over.

*One particular concern of the committee was the legal status of gambling in Nevada. Other states were worried for the same reason you've just stated: that Nevada was offering a haven for known criminals. Was that a legitimate concern for other states?*

No, because the majority of the complainants had gambling going on in their

community undercover. It was worse than it is here. It was run by the mob in Florida, New York, New Jersey. Look at it now—with all the states in the union looking at a lottery. What's a lottery? Gambling.

*Do you think that other states were justified in worrying that criminals—criminals in their terms—would come here, make very large profits from gambling, take that money earned here under legitimate circumstances, but use it for criminal activities elsewhere?*

They could get more money from the other states than they could get from Nevada: New York racing, New Jersey racing, Florida racing, California racing. That's gambling! They could get more money going to the other states that have racing than they could from Las Vegas. Las Vegas is only about the third or fourth city in the union that has gambling, and the profits from that gambling are much lower than they are in these other states. The mob, while it does control some of the tracks, they don't control them all. But the ones that they do control, they can skim off the top of that very easily for your pari-mutuel machines. I think that the other states might have closed their eyes to what was going on in their own community and pointed the finger at Nevada. When they started after the gamblers, after Las Vegas became well known, they all pointed to the fact that Nevada was a bastard state, and we ought to be routed from the union.

What I'm trying to say is, they can get more money from these states that have racing and lotteries than they can get from Las Vegas, which is legal gambling. If we'd go out of business tomorrow and they needed any money, they'd collect it from the race tracks and the other forms of gambling.

*On the other hand, Nevada clearly was attractive to people who were involved in illegal gambling, because it was sanctioned here.*

As I say, that is what the people of the other parts of the union said. Nevada is a sin community and we ought to be routed out of the union. The finger always was pointed at Las Vegas, because it became a resort city. Magazines loved to send their reporters out here to write negative stories about Las Vegas. These reached a height during the Kefauver years. It was about the acme.

*By legalizing gambling and allowing known criminals to function in the state's economy, do you think Nevada was aiding interstate crime?*

The money that came from Nevada probably was, but as far as the leaders of the community were concerned, they didn't worry too much about where the money was going. We didn't worry about what the other states said about us. We had enough of our problems here. Gambling was paying a lot of the freight for the operations of the state. We weren't too worried about what the other states thought about us.

*Did you worry about their problem with crime?*

Yes, we worried as much about crime in New York as we did in Las Vegas. Most of that crime was not done by the mobs. It's the same as it is here in Las Vegas, only a different area. The worst part of your community in Las Vegas is the area up there around Maryland Parkway in that housing area where all the Haitians are—the Naked City. That is our ghetto. It is much smaller than the ghettos in New York, Chicago, New Orleans.

Mob crime in other states was their problem, not ours. We didn't know that the money did come from Nevada. We never knew where the money went when these bag men were operating. Moe Sedway and people like that carried money from here to Florida. Well, who'd they carry it to? Lucky Luciano, or where it went, we don't know.

*The Kefauver Committee noted that since 1949 there had been an attempt to exclude criminals from getting licensed by the state, but they were also concerned that casino operators with criminal backgrounds had been grandfathered in. Can you comment on that?*

As I told you earlier, you could do anything in the city of Las Vegas that you were big enough to do, but don't step on somebody else's toes. I think that theory was assimilated by the mobsters who came in here. I know very definitely that was so in the case of Benny Goffstein. Benny Goffstein was one of the leaders in the gambling industry here, and yet he contributed more to the progress of the city of Las Vegas than some of the big shots who lived here. As far as Las Vegas is concerned, if the people are respectable and don't start in using any guns, they're accepted. Here they have a reputation for being respectable citizens. From New York City, these same people are called mobsters. Why should they be allowed in the state of Nevada?

*Does it concern you that, in some cases, these very people who we're talking about did commit or pay for violent acts elsewhere?*

Not too much. I mean, the whole community didn't go out and hold marches when Bugsy Siegel was killed like they're holding for Martin Luther King. Bugsy was

a member of the mob and he got killed—so what? They never did any of their acts here. Why should we worry about it? We'd get exercised over it if it had happened in Las Vegas, but it never did.

*Do you think that it was a mistake on the state's part to grandfather in known mob figures? In other words, do you think you would have kept the federal government at bay had you kicked out these mobsters as an example that you were cleaning house, so to speak?*

How can you tell who's a mobster? The mobsters, with the exception of Benny Siegel, don't operate any of these casinos. They're sitting back in New York, telling their boys out here, who are perfectly legitimate people as far as the state of Nevada is concerned . . . that's no different than anyplace else. As far as keeping the mobsters out of Las Vegas, the Gaming Control Board investigates these people pretty thoroughly. If they see any taint of gambling in the operation or bribery of judges, they're kicked out right now. They don't get a license. We've got the Black Book, which doesn't allow these people with known connections to the mob. They can't go into the casinos.

The people who were in gambling in other communities outside of the state of Nevada came in here when the casinos first opened. Now, who were the best people to run these casinos? It was the people who knew something about gambling. That's why you had people like Ballard Barron, who was out at the Last Frontier. He was somebody who had been in the gambling business for years—dishonest gambling. He came here and operated the games for the Last Frontier and became a very fine citizen. Those are the kinds of people who were grandfathered in.

*The committee also expressed concern that gambling profits could be used to buy political influence.*

There was never anybody who was able to buy senators or any of the political people that I knew of, until Tom Mechling came in here and tried to buy a seat in Congress. Also, Pearl Mesta's nephew came in and was running for Congress. At that time the state of Nevada was so small that if anybody got bribes, it was pretty generally known.

They had a bill in the legislature—something connected with gambling. I do know that the casinos sent a lot of money up to northern Nevada. I don't know whether they bought the legislators or whether that was for entertainment, but there was money sent up there. I don't think that's appropriate, and I don't think that after that one legislature that anybody else from the gambling industry ever sent any representatives up there to protect them.

*Your brother-in-law Cliff Jones was called before the Kefauver committee. The only thing that seemed to bother the committee was that he had a gambling interest and was lieutenant governor. That was a conflict of interest in their minds. Could you comment on that?*

He had been a resident of the community ever since 1933 or 1934. It would be better for the state to have somebody who knows about gambling, so that they could control it. There were a lot of people who were in gambling when it first started here who are now active Las Vegas residents. Their kids are going to school and going to church. I tried to—at the first law that they were preparing—to demand that one resident of the city of Las Vegas be named as a director of whatever regulatory agency they set up. There would be somebody

from Nevada who would be able to look over that stuff.

*What was Cliff Jones's opinion of the hearings, generally?*

The same as mine: that they might just as well have stayed away for all they accomplished, because they just didn't delve deep into the subject. If they had stayed 4 or 5 days, that would have been something, but one day wouldn't cover two men testifying. There was nothing accomplished from their hearings. There was no action taken by anybody. It was just a waste of time. It's part of the states' rights thing, that we have a right to pass laws to do anything we want, as long as it does not conflict with the federal laws.

*Based on what I've read from the Las Vegas part of the hearings, the committee pointed out that they were displeased with a system that allowed casino operators and owners to hold public office.*

Well, I wonder If they were pointing at Cliff. Cliff Jones has been a resident of the city of Las Vegas since 1934. The family has been here from 1933 on. They are public-spirited people who are elected to office. This is the kind of person the state of Nevada wants in its legislative discussions. Unfortunately, they haven't got them now. In those days we had a lot of good, sound citizens. Most of them were from the northern tier of counties—Elko, Winnemucca, Lovelock and those areas—who were good citizens of the state of Nevada and wanted to do the best that they could in passing laws.

*With regard to your brother-in-law, I understood that they were objecting on a matter of principle, that there should be no appearance of conflict of*

*interest between public officials and people who owned interests in gambling. Do you think the appearance of a conflict of interest should be a concern of the state?*

Not only of the state, but of the county and the United States government, because they've got plenty of conflicts of interest all over the United States.

*Would it have been wise to keep anyone with an interest in a casino out of public office, just to avoid that appearance of conflict of interest?*

No. An honest man never has any conflicts of interest. The people who we have sent up to the legislature have been here for many, many years. They know the conditions that exist in Las Vegas and in Reno and in Elko and in the larger areas where gambling is concerned. They're usually real good, solid, sound citizens. There is one statement that was made by one of the gamblers who was talking to another gambler who had filed for city commission. This first gambler said to him, "We don't run for office. We buy ourselves in." That may sound like a rather sad situation, but it isn't. They just don't run for office. For instance, I would trust a man like Benny Goffstein, who was in the business here for many, many years, to go to the legislature and be a good legislator. As you live in the city, you build a reputation for good or evil. Most of the people who were in the gambling business here in the early days have remained here and contributed greatly to the growth of the city of Las Vegas.

*It sounds to me as though you think that people who own an interest in gambling should be able to hold public office and . . .*

Not all of them. People who are generally regarded as good residents.

*Do you think there should be a law that prohibits owners and operators of casinos from holding public office?*

Now I think it would be a good idea, yes. At this point, not at any point in the past. But you don't have much of an argument when you've got Hilton and all of those other people—business people—in the business of gambling. Hilton and several hotels have corporate interests in the community. Certainly they're not going to have mobsters in a corporation.

*What impact did the Kefauver hearings have on Las Vegas?*

We couldn't follow the hearings, because they were closed. We publicized the fact that Kefauver was coming in here with his committee. Most of the people you talked to said, "Well, why doesn't Kefauver and his committee stay in Washington and solve the problems they've got internationally and nationally, rather than sticking their nose in our business." We could control the gambling pretty well. We were doing the best we could.

*What kind of damage was done to the reputation of Las Vegas on account of these hearings?*

The reputation of the city of Las Vegas was that they should have been kicked out of the union. As far as the local people were concerned, we were perfectly happy with the way we were running things out here. The only thing was that the hearings piled a few logs on the fire that had already been burning, because no place outside of the state of Nevada could you get any good reaction to anything that the state did. It was branded as a bastard child.



*To what extent were people here concerned that the Kefauver hearings would lead to federal regulation of gambling?*

It was in the back of our minds, because we didn't know exactly how we would fare if we didn't have gambling. If gambling was pulled out, probably grass would be growing up and down the Strip. There was some feeling of that sort, but I think that we had enough representative strength in Congress to see that that was blocked. The fact of the matter is that several bills were introduced in the Congress that would have affected gambling, but they were beaten by the power of Senators McCarran and Bible.

*Hank Greenspun could not let a lot of the issues raised by the Kefauver commission lie at rest. He published some very damaging information in the Sun, specifically about your brother-in-law Cliff Jones's interest in the Thunderbird.*

Yes, and he did the same thing to my brother. There were hardly any leaders in the community who didn't get hit by Greenspun. I guess I am the only one who publicly called Greenspun a liar. He wrote a column saying that I was involved in the Thunderbird Hotel. I had no part of the Thunderbird Hotel. I didn't have any interest in the Thunderbird Hotel. None!

I wrote a little box on the front page of the Review-Journal. It ran for about 4 days: "Greenspun is a liar." It told them a little about the fact that he had said I was a stockholder in the Thunderbird. I said, "I have never been, never will be." I got no answer from that. That was the type of stuff he did. He heard that Cliff's brother-in-law was in the Thunderbird Hotel, and he naturally said, "Well, there's John Cahlan." This is what he would do on a lot of things. It happened that Cliff's wife's

brother was the guy who had the interest in the Thunderbird. When they said Cliff's brother-in-law, they naturally thought it was me. They never called me about it. That's why I said, "Greenspun's a liar." I'm the only one, I guess, who publicly called him one. [laughter]

*On one occasion he published articles stating that he had tape recordings revealing that Clifford Jones, your brother-in-law, hoped to remove Robbins Cahill from the Tax Commission, because Jones feared Cahill's advocacy of regulatory authority.*

That was another one of Greenspun's lies. I have talked it over with Cliff on many occasions. He has said that Cahill's appointment was the best move that was ever made. The fact of the matter is, I think Cliff was up at that meeting. I'm not sure. I don't think Cliff had any idea that Cahill should come off. Greenspun took threads of truthfulness and wove them into a big lie.

I never saw any tape recordings. I never heard them, and I don't know of anybody who has. This was one of Greenspun's weapons: that he either had tape recordings or he had pictures. It would embarrass those people if they were run. I doubt very much whether he had them!

*On another occasion, Greenspun drew a connection between the Thunderbird and known mobsters, Meyer Lansky specifically.*

I think that the situation was that Marion Hicks, who was a partner in the Thunderbird, had friends who knew Meyer Lansky quite well. Cliff and Marion Hicks were having problems getting money to build the Thunderbird. The Kefauver committee said that they had a note that was written by Lansky to Hicks. There was a big furor



about it, and Greenspun had it blasted all over the front page. I don't know what ever became of that, because the Thunderbird was finished. There was no connection between the Thunderbird and Lansky as far as I know. They found this note, and the Kefauver committee immediately connected Hicks with the gamblers. Well, Hicks was needing money and he knew where he could get it.

*To what extent do you think your bitterness towards the Sun is related to the attacks on your family—the people closest to you?*

That has a great deal to do with it, because I'm not going to sit by and have the Cahlan name smeared by somebody who doesn't know anything about the background. As I told very many people, I hate very few people, but Greenspun's one of my first candidates. He tried to give the Cahlan family a black eye because Al was in power down here. There's no doubt about it!

*The Thunderbird's license was revoked at one point. Do you remember the background of that?*

No, I don't remember. I remember it was revoked, but I've forgotten the details of it. I do know that it was revoked, and 7 days later it was given back to them.

*It was revoked right after Charles Russell became governor. He had defeated Pittman, who your paper had supported. Do you think there was any political motivation behind the revocation of the license?*

There could have been. Russell had some words with my brother. My brother supported Pittman. Al was on the Colorado River Commission, and that commission

was appointed by the governor. As soon as Governor Russell got in there, he removed Al from office, because Al supported Pittman in the governorship race. It could have been partisan.

*Senate Bill 92 of 1957 was an effort to weaken the State Tax Commission's right to revoke gambling licenses. They wanted to force each case to trial and weaken the policing power of the Tax Commission.*

I remember it. It was hitting at Al and Cliff, I think. I supported the decision of the Chamber of Commerce, which was against the bill, because I was at the legislature supporting the Chamber of Commerce. I, naturally, would abide by the decisions that the Chamber made down here in Las Vegas.

*I've read that your brother-in-law and your brother were able to rally Democratic support and almost got Senate Bill 92 passed. In other words, they almost killed the policing power of the Tax Commission. What would have been the consequences of that?*

Why, anybody could open up a gambling casino; the whole mob could come in here and open up a gambling casino.

*The bill ultimately was defeated only because one senator, Ralph Lattin, changed his vote. In so doing, he sustained the governor's veto. Do you remember Ralph Lattin?*

I knew Ralph Lattin very well; he was from Fallon. As far as I was concerned, he was a good friend of mine, and I never doubted that he was an honest man. As I recall it, he was hidden out and didn't attend several of the first meetings. I think he was sort of "kidnapped"—was out of circulation for a

couple of days. During that time they voted on the bill and he wasn't there to vote, so the bill passed. Some of the people in the legislature took him to some place—a room or house or something. I've forgotten how that came up, but he was "entertained" in this house for 2 days. He just wasn't able to get to the legislative session till after the bill was passed. That was one method of legislating that they had in the state of Nevada on occasion.

*When the bill came up for the second time, the record shows that he voted against it. Do you remember what happened to him after he did that?*

As I recall Lattin didn't run for reelection. I think he went back to Fallon—went back to his ranch and stayed there. I think the SB 92 controversy had something to do with it—that the people in northern Nevada kind of got on his back either criticizing or jokingly referring to it wherever he went. I think that was what happened. I'm not sure, because I knew of the circumstances, but I didn't know the results.

It was his "friends" in the legislature who persuaded Lattin to vote that way. It was more or less forcing him to vote the way they wanted him to. That has been done in the past. It hasn't been done lately, but I know that was part of the political scheme of the legislature. When the leaders wanted something passed, they were in a position where they could take out one of the voters from the legislators—have him not there for voting.

*Did you see this happen yourself when you were up in Carson City representing the Chamber of Commerce?*

I had it happen to me, yes. I talked to one of the legislators about a bill, and he said he

couldn't do anything about it, because he'd already promised his vote. I said, "You could be absent, can't you?"

And he said, "Well, it'd be kind of hard because I'd probably get criticized."

So I said, "Well, all right, if that's the way you feel about it, but it's OK with me." The day the vote came up he wasn't present. That's the only one that happened to me personally. I knew of one legislator who climbed out the window and went down the fire escape out of the assembly, when he didn't want to vote. I saw that happen myself. It's more or less of a circus to go up there and attend a legislative session. I don't know anything about the legislative sessions now, but when I was there, there were a lot of shenanigans going on. I think that's about all that I could tell you of things that happened to me as far as the legislature is concerned.

*One scholar has written of Ralph Lattin's act, "It was a singular act of courage without parallel in the history of the state legislature. He was ultimately honored widely in the state for his acts."*

Oh, I think that's true. He was a good Nevadan. By that I mean that he had honesty and integrity.

*You felt he was courageous, even though your brother supported SB 92?*

My brother and I never agreed on everything. I did not actively get into the battle. I watched it from the sidelines, and I made up my own mind as to who was right and who was wrong. I felt that the Gaming Control Board or somebody should have control; somebody in the state should have power to control gambling.

*Did you ever own an interest in any gambling establishment?*

No. I never did, never was interested. I had several offers to get into the casinos. I just didn't want to invest in a casino. It wasn't because I was against gambling or anything of that sort. It just wasn't my cup of tea. I just didn't want to fool around with gambling. Al was in the original Golden Nugget, and I think he had some investment in the Thunderbird.

*You've already mentioned that a part of the state's response to the Kefauver Committee's hearings was to tighten up regulation. In 1955 Robbins Cahill was put in charge of a new Gaming Control Board under the Tax Commission. Why would they use "gaming" rather than "gambling?"*

They didn't want "gambling" spread all over the United States. Gaming was much better. I think that the Kefauver hearings backfired to the extent that we did a lot of work to control gambling. The Kefauver plan, we thought, was going to wreck all the casinos and everything that was in here pertaining to gambling. [This apprehension] eventually caused the new law which took the operation of gambling out of the Tax Commission's hands and put it in the hands of special outfits, which would control gambling, which I thought was a very fine idea. [Mr. Cahlan is referring to the 1959 establishment by Governor Grant Sawyer of the Nevada Gaming Commission, which has regulatory authority, and the Gaming Control Board, which has investigative authority. Both are independent of the Tax Commission.-ed.]

Robbins Cahill was born and raised in Sparks. His mother and my mother were very good friends. I'd known him for years and had

seen his activities on the Tax Commission. He was one of the best choices that could have been made. He took control of the thing and operated it the way that I thought was very good. Protecting the state from federal investigation was the main object of setting up this new gaming control situation.



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## LAS VEGAS JOURNALISM IN THE 1950S: DON REYNOLDS AND THE *REVIEW-JOURNAL*; HANK GREENSPUN AND THE *SUN*

In the late 1940s, the Review-Journal was growing. We had an 8-page press in the old building. We had to have a new press because an 8-page press would mean that we had to insert every time we had 12 pages or anything over 8 pages. That was rather a costly deal. Al had talked with Mr. Garside on numerous occasions and told him that we were going to have to get a new press. Mr. Garside was very, very reluctant to put any more money into the paper, because he figured after the dam was completed Las Vegas would dry up like most of the mining communities that he had a newspaper in. He had been in so many communities where it was a boom and bust, and he thought that Las Vegas was the same thing. He could see no prospect of growth here.

Al was undecided as to whether he should leave the paper or see if he could get somebody who had money and was progressive-minded. He started a hunt for somebody who wanted to buy a newspaper, and he found Don Reynolds. He talked to Reynolds, and Reynolds came up here a couple of times to

look the paper over. Finally, in 1949 Reynolds signed a contract with Al to operate the paper. Reynolds was president of the corporation, and Al remained as editor and later managing editor of the Review-Journal. The contract had a buy-or-sell agreement, which set up the idea that if somebody wanted to buy the other one out, the other one would either meet the price of the purchase that the chief made, or he'd have to sell.

Reynolds never looked over my shoulder, but he'd call meetings of the heads of the departments and just chew them out for things—minor things. They were things that had been going on all the time. He was very, very hard to deal with. He expected more than we could produce. Perhaps that was because of our lack of big-time newspaper experience, but his newspapers were all in small communities: Okmulgee, Oklahoma . . . I am sure Reynolds decided that the Review-Journal was to be his anchor paper of all his various newspapers. I think there were only 2 or 3 dailies that he had; most of them were weeklies. He never discussed

it with me, but I could see that he had the country-publisher attitude toward Las Vegas, that it was just a newspaper, and it didn't make any difference as long as it was making money. Reynolds had his headquarters in Arkansas and ran the newspaper from Arkansas. He was an absentee owner, and the longer he stayed, the bigger his absenteeism was. He was out visiting his other newspapers. I'd see him maybe once every couple of months. He set up a residence here so that his taxes would be less than he had been paying elsewhere. Now I think he's got around 23, 25 newspapers and 8 or 10 television stations and is one of the richest men in the United States.

To show you exactly what kind of a man Reynolds was: I was once back in New York at a seminar. It was the publishers who were meeting. Reynolds got a phone call from Las Vegas. He came busting into the conference that was there, and he yelled out, "Yea, we've got a strike in Las Vegas!" He was very happy about the thing. That strike was caused by the installation of these teleprinters. Reynolds just loved confusion.

He was a strange individual. He couldn't stand to be still. When I was going back to New York for that seminar, I wasn't about to fly on the airplanes that they had then, so I got a train ticket and went back by train. Reynolds said he'd see what it was all about, and he'd go on the same train. We had a couple of breakfasts and a couple of dinners together. He had his new wife with him, and about the second meal we had, he was griping about how slow it was and how he was in a hurry to get there. He gave the waiters hell; he complained about everything. He finally got off at Chicago and took the plane to New York. He was really high-strung.

In New York, here I am 3,000 miles away from Las Vegas, and he sits down and tells me that his future plans don't call for the

employment of Florence on the women's side. I guess it was at the same meeting that we were discussing whether we should keep the UPI or go to the AP. I think that most of Reynolds's papers had the Associated Press. We were discussing it back and forth, and he said, "What do you think about it?"

I said, "Well, the UPI has been very good to us, and they are as good a news service as the AP. Because of what they've done for us, I think that we should retain them."

He said, "All right. I'll retain them, but if it's not a success, you're fired."

This is the kind of a guy he was, and I guess still is. I know that he still is, because he did a similar thing to one of the other employees down there, who was the general manager. They had just had a conference at Lake Tahoe, where Reynolds has a cabin. During this session, completely out of the blue sky, he told this guy to turn in the keys that he had to the car—turn them in right then. This fellow never had any way to get home or go where he wanted to. I don't know how it came out, but this shows you just what kind of a man he is.

I once went back to Fort Smith, Arkansas at Reynolds's request to see how the Reynolds paper back there operated. Our operation out here was much better than it was in Fort Smith. I was very happy about the thing. But Reynolds couldn't see it. I had heard (I don't know this for a fact) that Reynolds had told somebody he was going to get rid of the Cahlans. And he did. I could see that from what he was doing with the newspaper.

For years, there was constant friction in the newspaper. It just drove Reynolds nuts. Finally, Reynolds demanded that the contract he had with Al be adhered to. In 1961, he offered so much for Al's share of the newspaper. Al couldn't meet the price that was set, so he was out in April of 1961. Reynolds



just said, "All right, I'm sorry. We are through." I think that leaving the Review-Journal broke Al's heart. When he walked out, he walked out like a beaten man, because that was the last time he was going to be down at the Review-Journal. Hank Greenspun respected Al's column—at least he said he did. And he said, "Why don't you write it for me?" And Al did. I was very surprised, because I thought that Al never would do anything for Hank Greenspun because of the vicious arguments in the newspaper headlines.

After Reynolds and Al had this disagreement and Reynolds decided to completely take over the newspaper, he came running into me and asked me if I'd stay as editor. I told him that I would stay till after the legislative session. It was just about the time that the legislature was meeting. I told him that I would stay with him until after the legislature, and then we'd talk it over as to whether I remained or not.

While I was in Carson City for the legislative session, Reynolds called me from Lake Tahoe and said he wanted to see me at the *Nevada Appeal*, which is another newspaper that he had bought. So I went over to the Appeal. He took me outside in his automobile and said, "I've made other arrangements for the editorship. I've got Bob Brown." (Brown later became the editor of the Valley Times in North Las Vegas. It was probably the best local newspaper in the area. It focuses on local issues the way that we used to do when I first started down here.) I told Reynolds that was his prerogative. So, that's the way it was: he didn't actually fire me; he just said he had gotten somebody to replace me. I put a note on the United Press teletypes that I was resigning from the Review-Journal. After I had put that story out, Reynolds put one out that Bob Brown was the new editor. I don't know whether I quit or whether I

was fired. [laughs] I wasn't getting any more checks from them. Reynolds gave me my notice about a month before the legislature ended in 1961. Here I was 59 years old. My experience in the newspaper was all lost.

After assuming complete control of the paper, Reynolds was a very flamboyant editor and publisher. He changed the masthead from an Old English-type masthead to a very black, blatant, block-letter masthead. He changed the whole operation. He was not especially interested in taking stands one way or another. I don't know where he got his editorial writers, but they were not what they used to be.

Let me tell you another story about Reynolds. I was going to New York on some business matter. I think it was for the centennial of Nevada. [John Cahlan directed the Nevada Centennial Commission from 1961 to 1963.—ed] I was waiting in the TWA waiting room, and Reynolds came in. He spoke to me, and I spoke to him. He sat down alongside me, and we talked over various things. When we got on the plane, he sat right next to me all the way to Chicago. From the time I first saw him until the time Reynolds left, Reynolds never said one thing about my brother's death. He didn't say he was sorry; he didn't say anything about him. He never mentioned my brother once. If he had mentioned his death, I wouldn't have said, "Yes, you SOB, you caused it!" Al only lived about a year, maybe two years, after he left the newspaper. They said he died of a heart attack, but I think his heart was broken when he had to leave what he had built up. And all for the want of a press. Had Reynolds not come in here, we would have not been able to grow much larger, because we just couldn't print off an 8-page press. Al had a reason. A new press costs a lot of money. I know Garside made money off the *Review-Journal*, and he didn't want to give it away buying a press.

*From what you've told me about the paper, we can call it a booster paper. You and your brother used the paper to sell Las Vegas, to promote Las Vegas. Did that change when Reynolds came in?*

After I left it did. Reynolds never was much interested in any newspaper that didn't make money. The bottom line as far as Reynolds was concerned: it had to be in the black. If it had red ink down there, you were gone, whatever department it was. I didn't have any experience in the advertising department, but I know there were several hassles in there. He was the kind of a guy who would drive you instead of lead you by suggestions. He was very direct.

*Did Reynolds discuss changes with your brother, or did he simply make changes arbitrarily?*

I think he would go in and talk to Al and he would say, "We're going to do this." He was very open-faced about the whole thing. He made a decision, and it went through Al and down to me, and it was done. In everything that he did, even in his social contacts here, he was the same way. Anytime he would meet anybody, he would be the dictator of the discussion. I mean he wouldn't let go of his ideas. I can't tell you of any special thing, only what happened to me.

*He wasn't interested in using the paper to promote Las Vegas?*

No way. Al tried to get him into politics, tried to get him in to the inside areas of Las Vegas, like the Rotary Club or the Chamber of Commerce. Reynolds just wasn't interested. Al kept on trying. Reynolds was interested in publishing newspapers. He didn't care what kind they were. He was interested mostly in

money. He couldn't get the attitude of the Las Vegas people. No way. The people had been reading the Review-Journal for many years before he came, and they were satisfied with the way it was being run. When he came, why, everything was chaos.

*Did the other community leaders resent him?*

Yes, very definitely. Some of them spoke to me about it. I just put it in the back of my mind, and I haven't tried to revive it. I can't give you the whole story; I wish I could.

I can remember when I was at the legislature and I told some of the senators and assemblymen who were there that the paper had been sold and that I was out. They said, "Well, what are we going to do now?"

I said, "Well, who have you got now to speak for the state of Nevada? You haven't got anybody in Reno." (The Reno paper was in the process of being sold to some chain newspaper.) I said, "The only place you've got to say anything to the people of the state of Nevada that will mean anything is in the *Elko Free Press*," which was run by Steninger. He had a real good paper. Jack McCloskey in Hawthorne had some political clout, and he wrote a column that was real good. The only trouble was that he was in a small town, and his paper didn't get much circulation. Our paper at the time was 25,000 circulation. It was recognized by most of the people in the state of Nevada as the outstanding newspaper in the state. They'd read Al's column. If there were political issues, he'd usually cover them in his column.

*The Review-Journal is always thought of as a paper that supported McCarran. Did you continue that support under Reynolds's leadership?*

Reynolds thought that McCarran could do him more good than anybody else, so he went along with supporting McCarran. Reynolds didn't interfere too much with the policy of the newspaper at the time. It was sort of an insidious thing.

*You mentioned that you had labor troubles at the Review-Journal in the early 1950s. Could you tell me about those?*

The first problem that we had was with the International Typesetting Union (ITU). It was made up of the people who worked in the back shop—the linotype operators and the people who were making up the newspaper. When Reynolds came in here in 1949, he set up the teletype machines, which, naturally, would eliminate most of your linotype operators. Teletype machines were printers that operated like a typewriter but punched out tape like the Wall Street stock exchange tape. You would write your story and punch it out on these teletypes and then run the tapes through the linotype machines. It caused a ruckus in the back shop, because the people who had been running the linotypes decided that they were going to be out of a job. There were about 10 people in the newsroom and about 15 in the composing room. They walked out of the composing room and left the linotypes there without anybody to run them. When Reynolds put in those teletype machines, they the workers were real hot. The installation of these teletype machines fomented the idea that the people should be organized, and they walked out in April of 1950.

We were on strike for nearly 2 years. We were on strike when we were on First Street, and we were on strike when we moved to Main Street. When we moved we were going to move the linotype machines and all of the

heavy equipment that we had in the office. So Jim Cashman, who was having labor problems at that time—they wanted to unionize the office help and the garage men—loaned us the trucks and the heavy equipment that we had to have for moving. He helped us move from where we were on First Street down to the office on Main Street.

Beryl Worley, who had worked at the *Review-Journal* ever since I came here, was the main mover in the strike. He was a linotype operator. He was a troublemaker from the start. He never did anything really bad enough to . . . he didn't sabotage anything. He was just talking all the time; he was discontented. I don't know why he stayed.

*Why was he discontented?*

Oh, everything: the food, the water, the wind . . . He didn't like Las Vegas, so he took it out on all of his workmen.

*Did he have problems at the paper?*

No, he worked very faithfully and he turned out the amount of type that he should have. He was just a discontented man. When he had an opportunity to get into this union business, he was the leader of the bunch. He was mostly the one who pushed it. Then the ITU sent some organizers in here, and Worley worked with the organizers.

*How about a couple of other names that you mentioned much earlier—Bill Busick and this woman called Sousev? Were they there at this time?*

I don't believe that they were there when Reynolds took over. I think they were there on their own . . . I think it was just about the

ending of the war when they were there. There were a couple of veterans that were working there. It was kind of a settling down process after the war, and I took what I could get.

During the strike besides my other jobs, I helped make up the papers-set them in the forms and got them on the press. We brought in a couple of people. The unions called them "scabs," but they were people who we thought we needed to get the newspaper out. They came in from California. Gradually we built up the back shop with these people who came in from California. There was an organization in California among the newspaper editors or managers themselves, that if one place was struck, they'd help out. So we got into that and finally got the back shop completely manned and had no problems. When we did that, the ITU decided they'd set up a newspaper to compete against us. [The *Free Press* was established 3 May 1950.-ed.]

*Did the workers have a legitimate concern?*

I would say they did, yes, because rather than having 3 linotype operators, we'd have maybe 2 working on the tapes. They figured they'd lose their jobs. It's much the same as it is now with this high-technology. The unions are not very favorable toward the high-tech stuff, because it's going to cost them jobs.

We never were bothered too much about unions until this thing developed. We had no problem up until the 1950s. We had no union problems at all; everybody was a big family. After the newspaper was out, we used to adjourn to one of the nearby bars and have a couple or 3 drinks and discuss the day's happenings and what was in the future. I felt somewhat like a father to most of the kids because they were much younger than I was. Some of them were just graduates of a university, and they came to me for advice.

I can remember that Myron Leavitt, who now is the district judge, came to me and asked me for advice as to what he ought to do—continue sports writing or go to a law school. I said, "For all intents and purposes, you go to a law school, because you won't be able to make much money as a sports writer anywhere in the United States. You won't be able to do the things that you'd like to do if you're a sports editor that you might be able to do if you become an attorney." That was the kind of rapport that we had.

I used to give a cocktail party for the staff during the Christmas seasons. I felt that my relationship with most of the reporters was good. They accepted my fatherly position and didn't hesitate any time to come in and ask questions or sit down at any of the slack times that we had at the Review-Journal and discuss what was going on. I loaned them money on occasions—not any great amount, but they'd be strapped or need something for some special thing, and I'd fix them up. It was more or less of a family.

In addition to being the fatherly person to them, I felt I was conducting a journalism school, because most of the kids who were there had just graduated from some college and were entirely inexperienced. I'd help them out a lot of times. When Florence came on her first big story (which was the Krause trial of a workman, who was suing the Six Companies for loss of sexual powers, because he was working in the tunnel and breathing the carbon monoxide), she came back from here first day of the trial and was just sitting looking at her typewriter. I said, "What's the matter? Can't you get a lead?"

She said, "No, there was so much that happened."

And I said, "Well, tell me what happened." And so she told me the story, and I said, "Write it just the way you told it to me." Those

were the types of things that I helped them out with. Of course, I was always correcting their grammar. As I say, I felt more like a professor in college than I did an editor of the newspaper.

There was one woman who was operating a linotype. Florence was there, of course. She was a reporter, and Mrs. Coleman was the cashier. The front office people wouldn't go on strike. When the back room people organized it was a shock to me. The strike didn't affect the newsroom so much. We were so close together—the newsroom and the back shop—that the feeling of the people in the back shop filtered into the newsroom.

*When did you first discover that the back-room people were trying to organize?*

Oh, about 2 weeks before. We had a foreman who had worked with Mr. Garside for many years on other newspapers, especially in Tonopah. He was not at all favorable to the strike, but when it came, he had to go with the rest of them. He said there was trouble being developed. When it did, we just didn't know how the dickens we were going to get the paper out. We had some idea that there would be difficulties when Reynolds put in the teletypes. We were not exactly ready for it, but we managed to get the job done. We never missed one publication, because everybody else in the paper was doing something to overcome the strike.

*You did not bargain with this union; is that correct?*

No. Reynolds was strictly non-union. The unions developed as a result of Reynolds's operations here. The typographical union knew that Reynolds and his other newspapers were non-union. Al and I were not too happy

about Reynolds's establishment of the teletype printer.

*Would you have preferred to keep the old-fashioned method?*

Why sure! The only thing is that it cost Reynolds much less money to have a \$25 or \$50 a week girl sit there punching all of this news out after it had been written, and then taking it out to the linotype operators for setting. I don't know that the teletypes were more efficient, but they were supposed to be. They were less of a cost operation, because the girls were getting \$50 a week as typists, where the linotype operators were getting \$8 or \$10 an hour. So it was a move for cost reduction. Most of the newspapers now have even gone beyond that, because they're in the high-tech stuff. Most of the newspapers about that time were set in the teletype machines.

*What was your attitude towards the labor-saving devices? How would you have handled that problem?*

I just don't know how I would have handled it, because it was something that was one of the forerunners of the present situation where you have machines that are replacing people in most of your industry, like the robots. I felt that the unions were just getting too strong and trying to tell people how to run their business, and I was all for the teletypes. There were some real good people in the back shop, but this Worley had his little clique, and he was always stirring things up. At that time the whole community was upset with strikes that were called. They were just getting too powerful.

*In view of these conflicts and difficult feelings over the workers and changing the machinery,*



*did you have any sympathy for their efforts at unionization? Were you able to see it from their point of view?*

I could see that they were out of work. They had been with us for many years, and I hated like the dickens to lose them. I knew them from the first time they came to work down there. We got along like a big family. As far as the union was concerned, I was not a union man. If they didn't cause us any problems, we didn't cause them any problems. When Reynolds came in, he demanded that they put these teletypes in. From then on, I was rather dubious as to how long it was going to last, and I found out. At least my feeling was that we'd test the teletypes out and see how it worked. It was a necessity as far as I was concerned, because the move was made by the publisher, and you don't argue with the publisher very often. Garside and Al were not opposed to paying the back shop—which was where the printers operated—a salary that they could live on.

*I've seen the trouble at the Review-Journal described in two ways: people describe it as a strike, and people described it as a lockout. Which is accurate?*

We wouldn't deal with the unions, so I guess we locked them out. Reynolds was adamant that we have no dealings whatever with the unions.

*What was your brother's opinion on that?*

He was sort of a middleman between the workers and Reynolds. He managed, through his personality, to take to the union people and see that the sabotage and everything was kept to the minimum.

*How did he feel about the union itself? Was he an anti-union man?*

No, I don't think he was an anti-union man. He wasn't a pro-union man. He was a man in the middle. If there were any negotiations made, he would make them.

*The labor troubles you had led to a spin-off paper—the Free Press.*

Right. That was the ITU. They came in here and set up this newspaper in competition to the Review-Journal. It was not a success.

*Did a lot of the old Review-Journal employees go over and run that paper?*

Yes. When it was not a success, they decided to pull out. They wanted to sell the paper. Hank Greenspun was here at the time, and he got the paper at a very low cost. I was informed that he paid 10 cents on the dollar for the equipment that they had there [Mr. Greenspun purchased the entire operation for \$1,000 on 30 June 1950. The following day its name was changed to the *Las Vegas Sun*.—ed.] The ITU just walked out of the whole strike; the strike was busted right there.

*Do you know the editorial policy of the Free Press?*

Union entirely. I think that the Associated Press gave them a contract for their news. The United Press wouldn't because they were too closely tied to us. I very definitely did not read their newspaper very often. I left that up to Al. He could read it, but I didn't want to be bothered by it.

*Do you know whether they tried to take on McCarran?*



They probably did, because the Review-Journal had been very faithful in their support of McCarran. As I say, I was not very interested in inside the Democratic party. I never went to any of their conventions or anything. Florence was the one who went there to cover them all. She just went to cover the stories, not get involved. Florence participated only when her brother Cliff was one of the leaders of the Democratic party. She supported him. He was district judge here just after the war, and then he ran for lieutenant governor and was elected. As I remember it, Al and a couple of other people—C. D. Baker, I think—got Cliff Jones the judgeship in the Eighth District Court here in Las Vegas. The incumbent had been raised to the federal court in San Francisco, and there was a vacancy there. Cliff was just getting out of the army. They engineered it so that he got appointed district judge. Then from district judge he ran for lieutenant governor and was elected.

*When did Hank Greenspun come to Las Vegas?*

I think he came here in the late 1940s. He was selling advertising on matches, brochures and things of that sort.

*Was he a public relations man for Bugsy Siegel?*

I don't think he was public relations man for Siegel; he took that title on his own. He wasn't opposed to building himself up. He was just like a carny barker who shooed all the people into one of the shows. He was very flamboyant. He had an ego that wouldn't quit—still does.

He didn't make any impression on the people of Las Vegas until he got into the Sun. Then he made himself well known. I met him out on the Strip. Most of the places I would go, he would be there.

Greenspun owned a piece of ground in the area where the Desert Inn was being built. As the story has been told to me, Greenspun's occupancy of that area made it impossible for Clark to get any money from it. Whether Wilbur tried to buy him out, I don't know. I never knew him or even paid any attention to him until he got into the newspaper business.

*Did anyone know of his political views?*

He was a Republican.

*Was he active in Republican politics locally?*

No. He just was one of the people who came to Las Vegas. He came here from New York. As the story goes, through people who came here from New York and knew him there, he flunked out of law school. He is a lawyer now; he finally finished, but he had problems back there. He was very favored and he was in a U.S. Senator's office. The Senator was a real leftist. He was almost a communist. I've forgotten his name now. But as far as anybody here was concerned, most of the people didn't even know Greenspun until he started the newspaper. -

*Did you think that he was going to be antagonistic towards the Review-Journal?*

No, not until he got into the newspaper. When he got the Sun, he had several hatchet men. Whoever he wanted to knock down, he gave the word to these hatchet men to start in chopping. Greenspun was a crusader; he went after anybody who was opposed to any of his thinking. That included McCarran and Al Cahlan and C. D. Baker and Cliff Jones and all of the leaders at that time. I don't know whether he had a favorite target. He was taking potshots at everybody. He ruined 2 or

3 local politicians by bringing up something that was long gone in the past and very minor and pumped it up into a major problem through his newspaper.

*Shortly after Greenspun began publishing the Sun, a number of major hotels cancelled their advertising in the Sun—the Thunderbird, the El Rancho and the Last Frontier.*

Yes, there was a big hassle that wound up in court. Greenspun was trying to elect someone who was running against McCarran at the time. Anyway, it was a political hassle, and Greenspun got his hatchet men out and probably spoiled the reputation of half the leaders of the community. Well, that was about the time that they were having problems in the Democratic party. McCarran was afraid that through Greenspun, he might lose some of the power he had. It was real vicious. Greenspun filed suit against the various hotels and McCarran himself. McCarran was the one who promoted the closing of the advertising. I think it was generally known that McCarran was in the picture.

I don't know that the boycott was sponsored by McCarran. I know that A. E. Cahlan had a lot to do with it. He was in the center of the battle. I think Al—he and other leaders—convinced the hotels that they shouldn't advertise with Greenspun. If he didn't get any of that Strip advertising, he would have to go out of business.

I don't know whether McCarran asked my brother to rally support and carry on the boycott. Anyway, we were perfectly happy to rally around, because we thought that Greenspun might have to go out of business. Greenspun had his meat men chopping up all the people he could think of. There was one situation that I know of when an accusation was made by Greenspun that he had pictures

in his safe that would, if he printed the pictures, show what kind of a guy a certain politician was. Nobody knew what kind of pictures he was talking about. He always claimed that he had pictures and stories about all of the people in the city of Las Vegas in compromising positions.

We used to have columnists on the editorial page—Westbrook Pegler and Drew Pearson. Pearson or Pegler had written a piece in his column that McCarran was in this mess. Judge Roger R. Foley called me down to the Federal Building. (this is when he was a federal judge.) He told me that we would have to drop the Pegler column and the Pearson column for the period of time that this suit was on. His being a federal judge, I didn't know exactly how to take it, whether I should or should not. I went back and told Al about it. He called Foley and told him that there was no way that they should be able to control what was in the newspaper. But Foley convinced him that it should be done, so we didn't run the columns for 4 or 5 days, until the case was dismissed.

*Greenspun sued; the charges were conspiracy and violation of the anti-trust laws. Do you think this boycott did violate conspiracy laws and anti-trust . . . ?*

I don't think there's any doubt but what there was a conspiracy. It was aimed at a publication. I think that Greenspun probably could have won the suit if he'd gone ahead with it. The case was dismissed because the defendant—McCarran—was in such health that they thought if they ever got him on the witness stand and started cross examining him, he'd have a heart attack. So they withdrew the charges, and the judge instructed the hotels to return advertising to the Sun. That was rather a blow, because a

big portion of the city of Las Vegas saw what Greenspun was trying to do. They were very much concerned about winning this suit and keeping the hotels from advertising in the Sun. When they lost, there were a lot of tears shed. There's no doubt there was conspiracy there.

It bothered me as to how the case came out. You have to get the Greenspun attitude and have lived here for years to see how Greenspun was trying to gain power by making the leaders of the community look bad. The leaders of the community were afraid of Greenspun, because they were afraid of what he was going to do. There was a real fear, as far as the inner circle was concerned, that this guy was going to put the town out of business.

Every once in a while Greenspun would do something and people would complain. I had one man ask me, "What are we going to do about Greenspun?"

I said, 'What do you mean, 'we'? You're the guys who brought him in here, and I can't do anything about it, so . . . ." I don't want to mention names, but it was a prominent leader.

*What did you think of Judge Foley's conduct in this particular case?*

It seemed to me, from what I had heard in the courtroom, that he was leaning greatly toward Greenspun. Whether it was because he anticipated the conspiracy charge, or whether he was just trying to help Greenspun out, I can't tell you. It turned out that he was right, because there was conspiracy there without any doubt. And it wasn't Foley that had the case dismissed; it was the defendant's attorneys. They were the ones who thought that if McCarran got on the stand he'd have a heart attack, and they'd lose him.

Al was sorry that Greenspun won the case. All the leaders of the community were. There

was a hatred for Greenspun that you can't imagine . . . all over town. Everybody who was reading the Review-Journal knew that Greenspun was trying to do what he did best: to wreck somebody's reputation. Whichever way Foley decided would not have been accepted as a good decision. The community was that much divided.

I think that if the people on the Strip had pulled their advertising—not all at once, but one on one day and one another week later and another one a month later—that would have eliminated the conspiracy charges. As it was, there isn't any doubt in my mind that there was a conspiracy. I wouldn't have wanted to be sitting in Foley's judicial chair if the case had to be decided. I think he heaved a great sigh of relief when the defendants decided to pull the case off the calendar.

*You mentioned that Senator Joseph McCarthy visited Las Vegas during this upheaval. Did you attend his speech?*

He was coming out to make a speech. I don't know who invited him out. We had a big meeting over in the War Memorial building, which was built where the city hall is now. No, I didn't attend it, but I talked to many people who did. They said that it got into a big shouting match and that McCarthy got off the platform and walked out of the auditorium rather than answer some of the things that Greenspun was charging. Greenspun got up and started in raving and ranting and asking McCarthy questions and called him a communist. We covered it, of course. I talked to McCarthy the day after it happened. I was convinced at the time that he was a good American, and that he was trying to run the communists out of Washington. But I changed my mind when I heard a lot of the things that he had done in Washington.

*From what I read of that meeting, McCarthy called Greenspun an ex-communist. There was some speculation that perhaps he had misspoken, that he meant ex-con, because of Greenspun's background. Do you think that was a mistake?*

He could have credited Greenspun with either one of them. It wasn't generally known, but a number of people knew that he had been convicted of piracy on the high seas—running guns to Israel. He had quite a reputation before he came to Las Vegas. He was convicted and later pardoned. [Greenspun was pardoned by President Kennedy in 1961.—ed.]

*The rivalry between the Sun and the RJ is well known. Can you describe the major points of difference between the 2 papers?*

Everything that the *Review-Journal* stood for, Greenspun was against. [From the start] the majority of his editorial comment was leveled against the *Review-Journal*. He was trying to lessen the power that the *Review-Journal* had in the city. His hatchet men would write their columns in the *Sun*, and would attack everybody who Greenspun wanted to cut down.

I can tell you who the people were who were working for Greenspun. Ed Onken was the first one. He was the first hatchet man. He had worked for the *Review-Journal*. I fired him because of some of the material that he wrote and the way he wrote it. He would slant leftism in there—not communism. It was just general over a period of years; just the way he wrote made me believe this. I can't remember any specific incident. There was Ed Reid who came here. He was the one who wrote *The Green Felt Jungle* about the city of Las Vegas, which cut Las Vegas up in little pieces. Then

there was Paul Price, who was not a bad guy, but he could get vitriolic. He did a job on several politicians here.

The way Hank Greenspun wanted to get circulation was to fight the *Review-Journal* and the powers. You can still pick it up. Instead of giving Las Vegas a boost along the way, the editorial policy seems to be to pick out the negative part and stress that. That's been going on for years. Greenspun never contributed any great amount of good through his newspaper. He practically destroyed Bill Peccole, who was on the city commission and exerted quite a lot of influence in the city. Greenspun just wrote negative stories. I've forgotten what the issue was that he brought up, but Greenspun just kept pounding and pounding and pounding. Peccole was just wrecked politically.

Ed Fike, who was running for lieutenant governor, had his political reputation ruined, because Greenspun took after him for a land deal that was down around Laughlin. Fike was one of the members of the board of directors—held some office—and was negotiating for the land down around Laughlin—a perfectly legitimate deal. Greenspun just built it up until it was such a scandal that Fike was beaten. That's the thing that he did with people he didn't like. He'd get them beat politically. Greenspun didn't have much to expose. He'd just attack them and tell the people who read his paper the guy was involved in a land deal that was not on the up-and-up.

*If his goal was the destruction of the local power structure, could you assess his success or failure at this endeavor?*

At the time of the election of Johnny Russell, who was the controversial mayor here for one term, he was behind Russell. Russell turned out to be the worst mayor we ever had.

But Greenspun built him like he was a king. He'd do that in any political race. He'd find something that was not exactly kosher and he'd blow that up into most everything.

I think that this opposition to nuclear waste we were supposed to store up at Yucca Mountain has been entirely generated by the Las Vegas Sun. I've talked to several people who have known about Yucca Flat for a long time. They say that there isn't a possibility that that stuff will leak. I base my opinion on what people have told me. I do know that Greenspun and his son Brian have been beating on this nuclear thing for years. It is just exactly like the Greenspun policy to do that—to hammer it and hammer it and hammer it until it finally explodes, and the people believe what he says.

*I have also read that Greenspun made a practice of publicizing complaints from the Westside . . .*

Oh, yes. The Review-Journal didn't make any issue of it, but Greenspun, who claims to be the voice of the people in his various columns, took up the cudgel for the people on the Westside. He got it done . . . He got the streets paved and sidewalks put in. Personally, I think he was right. But he went about it the wrong way in my estimation. Instead of blaming the city commissioners for not doing for the Westside what they had done for us over on the east side . . . The city commission and Mayor Cragin were entirely right at the time, because they didn't have any taxable property over there. It wasn't like that when this battle was going on. But Greenspun picked it up and ran with it, and they finally got the streets paved and sidewalks put in. It was usually in his column "From Where I Stand" that this was done.

*Did Greenspun make a practice of covering other things that the Review-Journal customarily ignored, such as labor problems?*

Greenspun waved the labor flag in all of the strikes that have been here. We treated the thing as factual news. Greenspun got his newspaper reporters to use the same tactics that the investigative reporters follow now—that "an informed source says." Well, who's the informed source? If the informed source won't be quoted, he should keep his mouth shut. When you get a story where you have to use an "informed source," or "those close to the president," say this and that, if they don't want to be quoted, they should keep their mouths shut. I have tried to tell a few of these people who have gone back to Washington, "If you say at the start, 'No comment,' don't let them put words in your mouth. Just keep your mouth shut."

They very seldom do, because they keep after them with, "Any comment? Any comment? Any comment?" Finally the guy makes a speech.

Most of the stuff that he was griping about we didn't put headlines on. We used it as factual news rather than being biased one way or the other. In this last Culinary Union strike (I wasn't in the newspaper business then) he always took labor's side.

*If the leadership itself is the source of information, is that kind of coverage . . .?*

Now, who's the leadership? If the labor leaders said it, then all right, they should name names. It's an "informed source" usually with Greenspun. I can be an "informed source" and tell them something that I don't know anything about. The *Review-Journal* would say, "Go over to John Doe and ask him about



what went on in this area.” Then at the time that the story was written, I would call John Doe and read the story and say, “Is that exactly right?” Whatever changes he had, I’d make. We never had any “reliable sources.” The reliable sources were named.

*Obviously, the Sun has survived. Is there an audience for this type of journalism? What do you think it says about Las Vegas and the local readership?*

The people Greenspun is trying to attract are the ordinary people who don’t get into the newspaper very often. I don’t think there’s any doubt in the world that when the feud was going on between the *Review-Journal* and the *Sun*, a lot of the people who complained about this being a one-newspaper town would slide over to Greenspun. He seemed to be able to attract those people.

*To which groups did he give a voice? Can you identify those groups or individuals?*

A lot of labor groups, and there were the people like Pipkin, who led the “parking meter” set, and those kind—the underdogs. They couldn’t get things in the *Review-Journal*, because they were inflammatory, and they were designed against progress in the community. Things we never paid too much attention to. Disgruntled people.

Charlie Pipkin was with what most of the people of the city of Las Vegas called the “parking meter bunch.” They would meet on the streets. I think “Hamburger” Smith was one of his cronies; he tried to get power here. Pipkin was in Cliff Jones’s office for some time as a researcher. I think he had been kicked out of the bar for malpractice. He was not exactly a good citizen. Pipkin tied in with Greenspun

and Bob Kaltenborn, who was a former president of the Chamber of Commerce and was in quite a lot of the politics of the city—not of the county or state. Kaltenborn was one of Greenspun’s coterie. Pipkin didn’t last very long. I think he was there maybe 2 years.

*Do you know any of the activities he engaged in while he was here?*

Almost anything that Greenspun wanted to publicize. He was on the outer fringe—sort of a gofer—go for this and go for that. He wasn’t up in the upper echelon. He was in the outer circle.

The *Review-Journal* may have been—I don’t think they were—at fault, because we didn’t cover those people more than we did. I think that we were wrong in not giving these people a voice that they thought they should have. However, in a controversy of that type, we always tried to give both sides the same coverage.

*Many people describe the Review-Journal as politically conservative . . . .*

It was conservative, yes.

*Is the Sun different in that regard?*

Oh, yes. I mean, I feel that the *Sun* is run for three reasons: one is for the Greenspun family itself; number 2 is for the labor unions; number 3 is for people on the Westside.

*You see the paper as left-of-center?*

Yes, definitely. I don’t think it ever has been anything else but. If you’ve noticed the headlines in the newspaper, the Israelis are never blamed for what they’re doing.



*Do you think Greenspun's Jewishness and Zionist sympathies have been a source of conflict?*

When the guy goes out and breaks the law by running guns to Israel, I think that most of the law-abiding people look on him as not a good citizen, despite the fact that he was pardoned.

*I'm interested in this problem, because in so many instances Nevada has been welcoming of people who have broken the law elsewhere.*

That's only in gambling. I don't think that any American should be in the position where he is breaking one of the international laws that are on the books. As far as Siegel is concerned, there was a different attitude at the time he was in here, because Greenspun was not in business. As far as the community was concerned, they didn't know Siegel and his background at the time that he was building the Flamingo. Everyone was very enthused, because it was the third hotel going up in Las Vegas; it looked like Las Vegas was going to become a resort community. Pushing for the progress of the community overshadowed everything.

*Why wouldn't Greenspun be seen as a rugged individualist out supporting his cause?*

He is with most of the Jewish community of Las Vegas. At the start, when I was in the newspaper business, he didn't go too much on that. He was busier commenting on the action of the local people and the local leaders.

The *Sun* seemed to take the red line. I can't say that Hank Greenspun was a communist, because I don't think he was, but he was always promoting the underdog. As far as

we were concerned, we were completely anti-communist. We believed that they were going to try to take over the world with their communistic beliefs, and we just weren't ready for that yet. There was a divergence of views as far as the *Review-Journal* and the *Sun* was concerned.



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## COVERING THE NEVADA NUCLEAR TEST SITE IN THE 1950S

*In the 1950s the nuclear test site was established in Nye County. When and how did you learn that Nevada would be chosen for a nuclear test site?*

All the media was requested to be down at the El Cortez Hotel; the AEC (Atomic Energy Commission) had an announcement to make. I guess there were 15 or 20 local people there. There were almost that many AEC people. Edward L. Heller was one of them, and Alvin C. Graves was another. Those were the 2 top men of the AEC. I know that the media was there. Jim Cashman could have been there and the mayor and the chairman of the county commission and that type of person. Chamber of Commerce would be there. Heller and Graves announced that they were going to start testing. We were told by these people that there would be no radiation effect, that they were taking all the precautions that they could to cut down on the radiation. However, in those days the bombs were set off above ground, and there was the possibility that

there would be radiation carried whichever way the wind blew. They would not set the bombs off if the wind was blowing toward any populated area. The people in Lincoln County and the people in southern Utah now say that the radiation got up to their areas and that the AEC was not telling the truth, which I am inclined to believe now.

At the initial meeting, they just generally said that it was going to be safe and that these tests that they were conducting were needed for the armed forces. They were very, very truthful about some of the things. The radiation was the main thing that everybody was interested in. They explained the whole routine of setting off one of the devices and how they were being careful and so forth. I think that the radiation problem has been blown all out of proportion, because I was within a quarter of a mile of one of the detonations, and I felt no effects whatever.

*When you first heard that the test site would be established in Nevada, what was your response?*

Here is a bunch of federal agencies coming in here and bringing in a lot of people. We were all for it. People started in telling us that the tourist flow would be lessened by the announcement that they were setting off atomic bombs here, but that did not prove to be true. In fact, it was just the opposite: a lot of people came up here to see the bomb go off. I can remember that Florence and I went up to the top of the hill out on Charleston Boulevard and watched it. It didn't affect the tourist business at all.

*Did any of the people present at that meeting express opposition?*

No. Most were more interested in the attraction that the bomb would give us than they were the effects of the bomb. I've forgotten whether Johnny Russell was there at the time or not. His group was opposed to the bomb because they didn't know anything about it. They were afraid of it.

*What kinds of questions did the AEC people ask about Las Vegas? Did they have some concerns about the community?*

No. They had been looking at Las Vegas for some time. They knew that there wouldn't be too much opposition, because the test site was 52 miles away from Las Vegas.

I don't that any specific person from the AEC came in here. There were a lot of people always coming in and out. We didn't pay any attention. They never came down to the office to ask me any questions. They had a public relations man by the name of Dick Elliott, who, after the announcement was made, came down to the office and talked to me. It was a discussion, just general conversation. He was asking about Las Vegas, and I was asking him about the devices—where

they came from and how they discovered atomic reaction and the history. He wrote a little pamphlet-sized book about testing in Nevada. That book is now out in the historical society; I gave it to them. We'd go out to lunch every once in a while.

I met Heller and Graves and the rest of the people through Dick Elliott. I thought that the 2 men had been working with the Atomic Energy Commission for several years. Heller was one of the experts on atomic reaction, and Graves had been building the AEC up for detonations. They had their big offices down in Alamogordo, New Mexico. There was no place in New Mexico or Arizona that could serve as a testing ground. When they came up here and looked at all the places in the western part of Clark County, they thought that that was the best place for them to test their bombs, because of the mountainous country up there.

*How many times did you actually meet with these two men?*

Oh, I would say a dozen. Quite a lot. When they were going to have their next test or something of that sort. I can remember one session that Heller invited all the media to come out. He'd explain the atomic energy to them. He went from the very beginning to what they had then, and it was quite interesting. He explained to the news media exactly what would happen, and he said that there should be no radiation that would go more than 10 miles from ground zero. They wanted to know how the people were reacting, and I told them that the majority of them would get up to see the bombs go off, because you don't see that sort of a spectacle very often. It was quite a thrill.

In 1952 they held an operation out there that was called Doorstep. It was televised from

ground zero to the television media. That was in the early years of television. I've forgotten the man who came up here and set up some towers on some of the mountains here and down around Barstow so that they could get their picture through.

[In 1953 a test called Observation Shot was conducted, and it too was televised.] They had built a small village out there—built houses of wood, brick, concrete block and things that are generally used—in order to find out exactly what would be the effect on the building material. They could recommend that if anybody wanted to build houses to resist atomic bombs, wood, I believe it was, was the proper thing that they should build with. They opened that test up to most of the civil defense people all over the United States and the news media from all over the United States. There were about 4 or 5 busloads that went up to the test site—the news media and all of those department of defense people. I was there, and very fortunately I saw the bomb go off. You had to use lead glasses. The brilliance of that bomb is something that I never want to see again. When it went off, there were all colors of the rainbow in the explosion. As it went up, it was a mushroom, because the thing would suck dirt up into the cloud. That was what the people were saying: that this cloud was blown out into their area and dropped radiation. Now, whether that's true or not is debatable.

At that time a large volume of troops were sent into trenches that were about an eighth of a mile from ground zero to see what effect it would have on their clothing and their eyes. I never heard or read of any of the people who were here at that time ever having any radiation effects. I think that probably with that many soldiers in here that there should have been some reaction from them. But I haven't heard of anything of that

sort being stated as, "This man was a member of the infantry which was established an eighth of a mile from ground zero, and he either had or hadn't gotten radiation." So as far as their test, apparently there were no effects from it.

In Operation Doorstep I went in there 12 hours after the detonation. I went in with ordinary clothes on and ordinary shoes and tramped all over the area. There was no effect as far as I was concerned. I know of no effect that resulted to the other newspaper people that were there.

*Did the AEC ask you to take any precautions?*

No. They just took us in and showed us the effects of the detonation. We were walking around within an area. We went into the houses and tramped around there for maybe 2 hours. They had a lot of dummies that were seated at tables. They were badly damaged from the force of the explosion.

*You touched things?*

Oh, yes. No problem. It never affected me.

*How close was this site to the actual detonation?*

Ground zero—I would say about a quarter of a mile.

*They didn't use any Geiger counters to see if you picked up radiation?*

No. Another thing I was told by some of the atomic people—I didn't see this with my own eyes—was that after the bomb had been detonated, the ground seemed to be agriculturally affected. A lot of the desert bush and trees grew more prolifically than they did before the bomb went off.

*Did it ever occur to you that maybe that would be an abnormality, that it might be cause for concern?*

No. If something lived through the atomic testing, and it provided soil that would grow things faster, why, I was convinced that the atomic bomb did some good. We [at the *Review-Journal* also] felt the same as the general public felt [about the economic impact of nuclear testing]: that here was a big investment that was going to be made at the test site. Undoubtedly they would have many, many people working there, which would be good for the economy of the community. As far as we were concerned, anything that would help the community financially would be welcomed. Nobody ever thought anything about the radiation. That was before they discovered that they could be radiated. We took the stand that it was good for the community. I still think it is.

*How and when were the local people actually informed about testing?*

It was quite interesting. The first bomb that they tested was supposed to be announced by the governor. He was to be the first one informed of the date of the test. We didn't pay any attention to the date until the governor released it. The morning that the first bomb was set off we got a telephone call from Mountain Pass that a trucker had seen the bomb go off and that it was quite spectacular. We put out an extra on the bomb, and as I recall, it was "Las Vegas Atomized." We sold quite a lot of papers on that. Later the AEC kind of kept the detonations a secret, and we wrote a couple of stories about how the bomb was expected to go off sometime during the week. I had FBI people come into the office and ask me. They thought there was some spying going on—espionage. I

told them, "There's no secret about the thing." I said, "We know the people at the airport, and they are telling us, keeping us informed about how these people are coming in on special planes from Albuquerque and Alamogordo and all of their other Sites."

After the people had been here 2 or 3 times, the bellhops out at the Last Frontier got to know them. They would call and say, "Well, the gang's coming in, so there's going to be a bomb set off; I'm sure there is."

We would put it in the paper that a bomb was scheduled at such and such a time—Monday or Wednesday or whatever. The people from the AEC down in Alamogordo would not come in here until such time as they were going to have another test. So the FBI wanted to know how we found out. I said, "It's very simple, gentlemen. It's the fact that these people come in here and they stay at the hotels. The bellhops know that they're here, and they call us. It's perfectly legitimate as far as I'm concerned." They were apparently satisfied, because there wasn't anybody that they could pin any espionage on, and yet we got information.

*When nuclear testing started here, were any of the medical authorities in town troubled? Did any doctors come forth?*

No. We knew there was going to be radiation, but they said that the radiation that would affect people on the ground was about twice as much as you get when you take an X-ray picture. That calmed all the doubters for a while. I got all the information that I thought I needed at that time. But I found out that the Atomic Energy Commission did not tell all the truth; that there was something that they didn't tell us about. That was the radiation, because it affected the other parts of the community to the north of Las Vegas.



*During the first years of testing, did you ever research the issue? Did you enquire of other sources?*

No. The best sources, I figured, were Heller and Graves, because they'd been working on this thing ever since it all started in Chicago. They had the best information that I could get anywhere, because there was nothing in any of the magazines or any of the newspapers that would know more than Heller and Graves.

*The testing took place after 2 bombs were dropped in Japan. Did you ever try to investigate the aftermath of those events?*

No. Not any more than what was appearing in the current magazines. We didn't pay any attention to it, because, at that time, that was the only way that they could end the war. If it was going to end the war and save 500,000 American lives if they'd had to invade Japan, we were for it. This thing was completely unknown until the bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Nobody had any background except the people who had been working with it at Alamogordo. Heller and Graves were our best informants. Anytime that they'd come to Las Vegas, I would talk to them about what was going to happen. They never at all mentioned radiation.

*Did you ever ask them about the effects of radiation on the Japanese who had been exposed?*

No. I figured it was part of war. If they got it, it was their own dam fault. So little was known about atomic energy. There were so few people who you could get information from, because the AEC held a clamp on all of the information that should have been

given to the public. I think that the AEC was negligent in not warning the people of the state if there was any possible chance that radiation was going to hit some of the communities here and in Utah. They just us that the bomb was going off. They told you not to look at the bomb at the time of the explosion, because it was so bright it would hurt your eyes.

*How did the government disseminate information about the blasts? Were there pamphlets?*

No pamphlets, no. Just what we would publish. There was a time when they would stop all the automobiles that had come from Las Vegas going north toward Pioche and Caliente. They would stop them and wash their cars to get rid of any radiation.

*Did that raise any suspicions in your mind?*

No, not at all. We were not afraid of the bomb. People out on the Strip who were gambling when the bomb went off—and you could feel it and see it here in Las Vegas—would all say, “Well, there goes another one.” They'd continue on in the crap game or the roulette. It didn't bother anybody.

*Did any incidents ever come to light in connection with bomb detonations? Did you ever get any stories from outlying areas, observations from people, anything of that sort?*

No, because they were at a loss to explain anything as far as radiation was concerned, because the people who lived around them didn't know anything about it. Here in Las Vegas, we were being lectured every time they'd come in, and they would give us information that there was no radiation.

*Would the AEC call a meeting to get you all together to . . . ?*

No. You'd have to seek it out yourself. I became very closely associated with a lot of the people who were out at the AEC at the time. They would discuss things with me—the possibility of radiation. The stuff that they fed me may have been sugar-coated, because now we know more about radiation. We got a history of the bombs or devices that were out there. We know more about it than we did at the time.

*In 1953, a large number of sheep in Utah died, and there appeared to be a relationship between a test and the deaths of these animals. Do you remember that incident?*

Yes, I remember that. Dick Elliott said, NI don't think that's possible, because we have a cow that has a glass window in her side, and we check to find out what's going on in her interior." He said, "We have animals out there that we make the tests on after a bomb goes off; they're radiated." He said that they had no problems. Well, knowing more about it as I do now, it is entirely possible that all of the radiation was in the atomic cloud which floated over the area where these sheep were.

*Did people—the downwind people, as they call them now—ever call the paper to tell you that they'd had fallout in their area?*

No. They did most of their complaining to the AEC, which had an office here. The AEC said that if there were any complications where they were living, they would like to know about them. People always reported to them, and we got it from the AEC. And there was a congressman from Utah who made a big speech back in Congress in Washington

about how his people in St. George had been affected. But there was no idea that this was anything that was going to affect the people away from ground zero.

*Did the paper ever receive any negative letters?*

No.

*You said you witnessed tests yourself. How many times did you see these done?*

I just saw the one which they opened to the Civil Defense, and there were newspaper people from all over the country who were here. In the first place, you would hear the big boom, and about 3 minutes, 5 minutes later, the effect would come in. You would feel like somebody hit you in the stomach with a piece of pipe or something, and it would pretty near knock you to the ground. Then you'd see this cloud forming and going up in the sky. There have been several places where some of the bombs have broken plate glass windows and windows in the house. You could feel the rattle or the shake just like an earthquake.

*Was Florence with you at this event?*

No. She didn't go out.

*How did she react to the testing generally?*

She wasn't frightened at all.

*After witnessing one of these go off, did your opinion or outlook change at all?*

No. I knew that it was deadly. I couldn't see how anybody within a range of 5 miles could not be affected. I could see that there was a very definite possibility that if anybody was within range they'd be severely injured

or killed, because it was powerful, the most powerful thing that I've ever seen.

*Did it in any way shape or reshape your feelings about war in general?*

I never have figured that anybody ever won a war. I thought that with this atomic bomb that the United States had, that there would be no further wars. Then come along the guy that gave the information to the Russians, and the Russians got it. Why, the chances of war were that much heightened. (Mr. Cahlan is referring to the Rosenberg case.—ed.) I remember the case. Anything that I knew about the case was what came over the wire. We gave it a good play. At that time I was not particularly afraid of anything. We didn't have any worries about radiation. Afterwards, the whole picture changed, and the lives of people were changed. I know 2 or 3 people who, after some of the bombs had gone off, dug cellars so that they could get down like they would in a hurricane. And I know 2 or 3 people who stocked their dugouts with a week or 10 days of food, a refrigerator and everything.

*Would people ever leave town before one of these things went off in order to get their family out?*

Not that I know of. People were not frightened, because they didn't know what was going on out at the test site, only that bombs were being set off.

[Now, with only underground testing since 1962,] if there is any danger of radiation, it would not be from the atomic device. Underground, they very seldom have a leak. If they do, it's very small. I think that what the people are more frightened about is the fact that this atomic waste will get into the water

that we drink, and it would be a little rough if it did. I don't think that they're afraid of any other physical harm that will come to them.

*When you look back on the way you covered this period and the way you regarded the test site, do you have any regrets?*

No, because the general public did not know anything about atomic devices, and they didn't know what was going to happen. Radiation was not any great problem at the time that the bombs were being set off. We know more about it now. As the effects are piled one on the other, then we know more about it and want to know more about it. But at that time, it was just another bomb, and just another explosion going off out in the desert.

*Do you think the government deceived you?*

I'm absolutely sure of it, because they did not give us the information about the radiation. I think that they've been deceiving people ever since the Union was formed. There is secret stuff that has to be kept secret. As a result, they don't give you the full story. I think that that is shown in the last 2 hassles that they've had with Nixon and now, Reagan. There are things that the people don't understand, that Congress doesn't even understand. I think the government was justified in keeping some of this information secret, because this was one weapon that we had that we could hold over the heads of anybody that wanted to invade or get in a war with the United States. There have to be some secrets. If you have it open, then everybody knows about it. That was the situation as far as the atomic devices were concerned, that they wanted to keep it secret so the Russians or the Chinese or whoever wouldn't get any information about the device. We'd still have

a club to hold over them. Now everybody has it.

*You said that the tests did not have a negative effect on tourism. In fact, you suggested that maybe they helped, that the tests actually brought people here. How was nuclear testing incorporated into the local culture and folklore? How was it used by promoters and hotel people?*

They never used it at all. It was just another thing that happened. They were more interested in the tourists than they were in the bomb.

*I've seen references to things like the "atomic cocktail" and women wearing atomic bomb bathing suits and that kind of thing. Do you remember any of those?*

I don't remember that those things came into Las Vegas. There was one place downtown that used those things as promotion. There may have been, but I don't remember them. I do remember seeing some displays in one of the shops downtown: "I have been to Vegas and been atomized." They were aprons or things of that sort-sweatshirts. They were tourist gimmicks, no doubt about it. Locals weren't too interested in the bomb. If it was going off, OK. If it didn't, why that's OK, too. They took it for granted as just a routine of the day.

The Ancient Order of Atomic Bomb Watchers was an organization of people who had witnessed the blasts. It was just a gimmick. When this Operation Doorstep came in, we knew that there were going to be a lot of newspaper people here. As a result, I figured out a deal where we would form an organization of the atomic bomb watchers. Benny Goffstein and I figured out that we'd form this organization to give membership cards to all the media people who were

here for Operation Doorstep. They were given to the media only. It was my idea, and Benny Goffstein helped out on it. He gave a room at the Riviera and had a big cake and a regular celebration. On the cake they worked out a design of the atomic bomb and had it as a centerpiece for the cocktail party. Bob Considine, who was a widely-known columnist from New York, was here. I'd known Bob for 3 or 4 years before he came here. He was the president and I was the business agent of the atomic bomb watchers. We passed out these atom bomb-watchers cards. We had many requests for the cards, but we only printed enough to give out to the people who were at the party. They were all newsmen who have been forgotten. The cards became things of value as keepsakes. Bob Considine told me that he saw one over in China. Some guy that was over in China had been here for the thing. I've still got mine in a safety-deposit box.

*Was this the only time this group was together?*

Yes. It was just a gimmick. If they wanted to save the card, why that was fine. If they didn't want it, that was fine, too.

*I know that Nevadans are often skeptical about the federal government. Why, in this case, did you put so much trust in the federal government's word?*

This was an entirely new agency that had been set up after the war. You had great scientists like Heller and Graves and the rest of these people who were the only ones who knew anything about the effect of the atomic bomb. We took their word for whatever the effect would be, because they were the ones who knew. Nobody else in the United States knew anything about it, except the president.

*Politically, things have changed considerably since those early days of testing. Lately, there's been some protesting at the test site—people coming here from the outside. How do you see testing in that context?*

I haven't seen any rush of people to get out of the community; I've seen a rush to get into it. As far as these protestors are concerned, they don't know the first thing about atomic energy. They only protest something that they're not familiar with. I don't think that those people are going to have any permanent effect on the AEC or any of the public officials. You're getting so many protestors against this and that and something else that another one just joins in the mob.

These people have no business being out there. They come from afar; they're not involved in the community. I don't think that they are doing any good for anybody, not even themselves. All they want is publicity. They all say, "Well, we're going to get arrested." They tell the TV people that they're going to be out there. The TV people go out and photograph them. The newspapers have big photographs on the front page that just give them all the publicity they're not entitled to, I don't think. If I was in the newspaper business, I would put about a 3-paragraph story on it and put it in on page 18. What good are they doing for anybody?

I was never worried about what was going to happen at the test site. It was an event that was going to add more people to the city of Las Vegas, and the economy would be much better off. That was the main thought that has carried through all of my newspaper work down in Las Vegas. It's better to have people come in here than it is to have them scared to death.





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## OBSERVATIONS ON NEVADA POLITICS AND POLITICAL FIGURES, 1930S-1950S

*When we talked about your parents, you said that your father was a very staunch Republican. Did you and your brother grow up thinking that you, too, would be Republicans?*

That was in the back of our minds, as we came along in our older days of going to high school and going to college. I think the first couple of times I voted I voted as a Republican. It came because my father and mother were both Republicans. But when we came down to Las Vegas, Clark County was 3 to 1 Democratic. There wasn't anybody who you could vote for on the Republican ticket because they didn't have anybody running. Nobody was interested because it was 3 to 1 Democratic. Al was a Democratic national committeeman, and I've forgotten what years that was . . . . He served for, I think, 2 or 3 terms.

*Was there something about the Democratic party that attracted him, or was it, as you said, simply a matter of Democrats running the county and . . . ?*

I think that was the reason; I never did discuss it with him. That's the reason that I registered as a Democrat when I came down here. I hold the record of being the only man in the county who served on both the Republican and the Democratic county central committees, because I changed my politics. The first time I changed, I was mad at Roosevelt. Of course, Hoover went down the drain; I was a Republican at that time. I got mad at Truman because of some of his gyrations, and I changed my registration again. I've changed it about 4 times, I guess.

I thought that Franklin Roosevelt probably would have been the greatest president—that he would be up there alongside Lincoln and Washington, if he had stayed for the 2 terms, only. That was an unspoken rule of the nation. He accomplished a great number of good things. He got us out of the Depression and set up a lot of things that generated a lot of interest in the future. The National Recovery Administration was a good idea, but it never worked. Some of those presidential takeovers, like closing the

banks and that sort of stuff to get rid of the Depression, I thought were good.

*Roosevelt usually is thought of as a president who strengthened the power of the federal government and increased the bureaucracy. Are those things that you approved of?*

As far as the bureaucracy is concerned, I resented the fact that American people couldn't do anything without the courts having decided whether we can do it or not—word coming from Washington that we had to abide by some rules that were designed for the East Coast. I have always been a states' rights man. I believe that it is easier to run the state of Nevada than it is to have the federal government in Washington make rules that embrace the whole 50 states. One of the reasons that I thought that Roosevelt was a little out of line was he was sure that the states should give up some of their rights to the federal government. He was the start of the bureaucratic government.

*How did your brother feel about that aspect of Roosevelt's administration?*

He was a states' righter, too. I never talked to him about it very often, but he believed much as I did that there was too much states' rights being taken over by the government.

*I gather you did not vote for Roosevelt in his third run for office.*

No, I voted for him the first 2 terms. Roosevelt's strength in the third term was the fact that he was president during the World War and doing a pretty good job. He engineered the defeat of both Germany and Japan, so you had to respect him for that. The meetings and decisions that Roosevelt

had in this third term at Yalta when he was dying were something that led to the difficulty between the Russians and the United States now. In his third term and when he went to Yalta, I think Roosevelt didn't have the ability that he had in his first 2 terms.

Originally, I was not a Truman supporter, because I didn't think that he had stature enough to occupy the presidency of the United States. But I changed my opinion because of some of the decisions he made. I thought he made a good decision when he fired MacArthur. That goes back to my feeling that the Board of Regents should make the policy and the professors and anybody connected with the university should abide by them. As far as Truman was concerned, he was commander in chief of the army, and MacArthur was opposing the decisions he made. A president of anything can't get along under those circumstances. He's going to have to get rid of him.

I was able to talk with Truman when he was here on an investigation of the BMI. He talked like a westerner. He had a lot of ideas that we had out here. I think that the position made the man. He was a true American. He was a haberdashery merchant in Missouri; he had no glamour whatever. He acted, I thought, like a resident of the United States should act when he's elected president.

If anyone is deeply interested in the politics of the state of Nevada, they should get a book that was first written by Johnny Koontz in the secretary of state's office and it was continued by Bill Swackhamer. That gives a rather in-depth history of the politics in the state of Nevada. [Political History of Nevada, 3rd edition by John Koontz, 1948. Revised 1959, 1965 under Koontz. Revised 1973 under Swackhamer.—ed.]

You've got to go clear back to 1864, when they had the constitutional convention in

Carson City. At that time Las Vegas and Lincoln County were not in the state of Nevada, because that was part of Arizona. It was not admitted to the state of Nevada until later. [The territory that includes Las Vegas was added to Nevada in 1867.—ed.] That was one of the prime reasons that the north-south line developed in the state. Very few people had ever been down to this area from the northern part of the state, and there were very few politicians who went up from here. That was the time each county had one senator, and they were sent up there for the session of the legislature.

There was no political power down here at all. It developed into a two-ring affair: you had state politics and local politics; you had the leaders in the northern part of the state headed by George Wingfield, and you had the ring down here headed by Ed Clark. The two of them just didn't recognize each other. They went about their business and ran their part of the state as they wanted to. The north-south trouble started with that division of the state, and it has gone on and on through the years and still is developing. I don't think that there is any possible chance that the north and the south ever will get together on anything. It's retarded the development of southern Nevada and also has brought about difficulties in the legislature with the laws and law enforcement.

Another thing happened to make the south rather angry: when they built Hoover Dam, there was a phrase in the contract that when the dam was completed, the government would pay the state of Nevada \$320,000 a year in rural taxes. Clark County, having the dam in its area, felt that the \$320,000 a year would go to the Clark County treasury. I think it did for 2 or 3 years, maybe longer than that. But, anyway, the legislature passed a law which put the \$320,000 into the general fund that was distributed throughout the state to all of

the counties per capita. The southern Nevada people were very, very angry that they had taken that money, because the people down here felt that this would help develop southern Nevada. They thought that the legislature was taking money out of the pockets of the taxpayers down here. That money was divided among all of the counties, and most of the counties were in northern Nevada. As a result of that, the political power that Washoe County had held for so long was built up by the fact that they were able to give these other counties a part of that \$320,000. That made Washoe County and the cow counties the bad men of the state. The southern Nevada people figured that the north had robbed the state treasury as far as that money was concerned.

Jumping back one lap to the early days in politics, the Constitution had the United States Senators elected by the senate of the state of Nevada. It was very easy for the nabobs, who were rolling in the wealth of the Comstock up in Virginia City, to purchase a seat in the U.S. Senate. That's how William Sharon got elected. He was elected as a member of the United States Senate, and he never lived in the state of Nevada after he got elected. He went down to California, and, I believe, he was the one who built the Palace Hotel in San Francisco. That was the politics then. For years and years, from the start of the state in 1864, the political and the financial wealth surrounded Reno, Virginia City and all its money and all of the cattle and ranges up there. Clark County was more or less of an orphan child. Nobody in the north even recognized the fact that they did have something down here in Las Vegas.

I knew Governor James Scrugham, because he was the dean of engineering at the university before he entered politics. He also purchased the Nevada State Journal. My brother was a student of his; knew him quite well. Scrugham was one who recognized the

importance of the southern part of the state. He used to come down here quite often and was responsible for building the Lost City up in Moapa, which now has the Lost City Museum. [Mr. Cahlan is referring to the reconstruction of Indian settlements covered by the waters of Lake Mead.—ed.] It has been built up into quite a historic place, because it was where the Indians built their community.

I met Governor Scrugham through my brother. When Scrugham was in the Democratic party, Al introduced me to him, and we became quite good friends. I had known him during the time he was governor, from 1923 to 1926. After he got out of the governor's job, he bought the Journal. So I worked for him on the paper for about 2 years.

Nevada hadn't taken party politics very seriously. The state was so small that the politicians who were running for office knew practically everybody in the state. Scrugham bragged that he knew every citizen in the state of Nevada by his first name. It was possible that he did, because he would campaign by automobile over dirt roads. Sometimes there weren't roads leading to the place he wanted to go, but he would travel the whole state of Nevada and try to meet all of the people there. He was one of the most active campaigners of any of the people I had known who became governor.

I first knew Key Pittman when he was serving in the United States Senate. I was on the Nevada State Journal at that time and had interviewed him several times. Key had known my father, and, as a result, I counted him among my friends. When Key was sober, he was one of the most intelligent people in the United States Senate. He was head of the Foreign Relations Committee at the time that I knew him; that was prior to World War II. He became one of the most powerful senators in Washington. If there was anything

that anybody wanted from the government, they'd go to Key Pittman. He had an alcohol problem, but when I knew him, he was a very fine southern gentleman. I think his family came from Georgia. He had two brothers—Vail, who later became governor of Nevada, and another whose name I don't know.

Key had gone up to the Klondike in his younger years and went over the Chilkoot Pass in Alaska going after the gold that they supposedly found up there. As he was driving his dog team up the Chilkoot Pass, he met this woman coming down the pass, and he was attracted to her. When he came back, he looked her up and they were married. She was not very active in politics, as far as Key was concerned. She was more or less of a senatorial decoration and appeared with Key at the functions in Washington and was quite active with society back there.

My brother knew Key Pittman. I don't remember exactly when they met, but it was while Al was in Elko. He became very friendly with Key because Al was a newspaperman in Elko, and Key needed all the help he could get to be reelected. Al was in the background all the time that Key was in the Senate.

I can tell you how my brother Al lost the opportunity to go to the Senate. Al assisted in getting E. P. Carville elected governor in 1938. Key Pittman was reelected to the Senate for a sixth term in 1940, but he died 5 days after the election. Carville was the governor, and Ed Clark was the national committeeman with the Democratic party. Al went up to Pittman's funeral. It was agreed among Carville, Ed Clark and my brother that Carville would appoint my brother to the United States Senate in the post that was vacated by Pittman's death. This was all wrapped up and apparently ready to be the gift that Carville was to give to Al. It was agreed between Carville, Ed Clark and my

brother that Al was to be the appointee. No question—none whatever.

I was in the Apache Bar one night, and Bob Kaltenborn came in and said, “Do you know who’s going to be the next United States senator?”

I said, “Yes.”

He said, “Who?”

I said, “My brother.”

He said, “No, he isn’t, because Carville just sent down to get Berkeley Bunker to go up to Carson City. He’s going to announce the appointment when Berkeley gets up there.” Sure enough, the next day Berkeley was appointed to the United States Senate. Why or how the split came, I don’t know. There was no inkling before the appointment was made that Carville was considering anybody but Al.

*Do you think Ed Clark would have liked to receive the appointment?*

No, I don’t think so. I don’t think Ed would have liked to get out of the city of Las Vegas.

*This also brings Pat McCarran into the picture. I assume that McCarran would have a lot to say in advising . . .*

Not at that time. He didn’t have as much power as he had later. McCarran was the junior senator. I do not think McCarran had a candidate in mind.

When Carville was running for governor, my brother asked me to get the Junior Chamber of Commerce behind Carville. I was the third president, and this was about 3 years after the Junior Chamber of Commerce was formed. I said I couldn’t do that as president because the Junior Chamber of Commerce took no active part in party politics. I said, “Why don’t you get Berkeley

Bunker to run his campaign down here?” So Al visited Bunker, who was pumping gasoline in the service station down on Fifth and Fremont, and Berkeley agreed to run Carville’s campaign down here. That is how Carville became known to Bunker and Bunker to Carville. I am sure that that was one of the reasons that Carville appointed Bunker.

*Why would he have picked Bunker, a relatively unknown . . .?*

This I can’t tell you because it’s politics. I heard from a very good friend of mine that his father was in the governor’s office. Al either walked by or came in the door or something, and the father of my friend said, “There goes the guy who thinks he’s going to be United States Senator, and he’s coming in for a big shock.” So what the motive behind it was, I can’t tell you. As far as Carville and Al were concerned, it just chopped their friendship off. Al was very, very hurt. That was one of the reasons that he withdrew from being active in the political scene. He didn’t completely withdraw from politics; he was the man behind the scenes most of the time.

Al and I discussed it casually, and I tried to find out if he knew why the switch was made, and he said he had no idea. I never spoke to McCarran on that situation at all. I don’t think McCarran was mixed up in this one, because he was just gaining political strength. When Pittman died, this made McCarran the senior senator. He started in from there and built up his political machine.

*Do you think McCarran would have favored your brother’s appointment at that time?*

He wouldn’t oppose it, because they were both good friends.



*Do you think he would have pushed for your brother's appointment?*

He might have, because he and my brother were very close friends at that time. I'm sure that McCarran could have worked with Al. I think McCarran stayed out of that fight. He was building his machine, and he didn't want to get any outside material into the organization. I think he didn't care.

There was talk at the time that Carville was going to step down as governor and have the lieutenant governor appoint him to the Senate. Carville's wife probably was an influence on his decision not to do that. (This is getting into rather irreligious areas.) Mrs. Carville was very friendly with the bishop in the Catholic church in Reno. He was the bishop for the entire state. He was a visitor at the mansion up there many times and sometimes spent a week up there. I think that Mrs. Carville probably didn't want that close association with the bishop to be interrupted, and she argued that Carville should not appoint himself. Now, that's my opinion. She didn't think that they could make it in Washington. That is my theory of the thing; I have nothing to base it on, except the fact that Carville didn't appoint himself, but he did appoint Berkeley Bunker.

*What was Ed Clark's response to this?*

Ed was one of the people who pushed Al's candidacy. He argued or talked with Carville when they were up at the Pittman funeral. Ed was a thousand percent behind Al. Whether that had anything to do with it, I don't know. There was no problem between Carville and Ed Clark that I know of; they were friends and also Catholic. Whether that had anything to do with the final decision, I'm not prepared to

say. It was something that took the whole state by surprise, because everybody was figuring that my brother would be the appointee.

*What about your brother's local political activities?*

He worked for a lot of people who were elected to the legislature, and I think that he was one of the people who would pick candidates. Al was part of the power structure; he was able to get the right people to run. By that I mean not the right people who he could control or anything of that sort, but the people who felt the same way that he did.

Al made several politicians. H. E. "Hap" Hazard is one of them, and Helen Herr is another one that I know personally. Hazard was the assistant advertising manager of the Review-Journal. Hazard had run a couple of times for constable and was beaten in both races. He decided he wanted to run for assembly, so Al got the power structure to back him, and he was elected. The same thing with Helen Herr when she was first elected to the assembly. He thought that she was a great politician because she got East Las Vegas named East Las Vegas. Helen Herr later became a state senator.

*Did you and your brother see eye-to-eye on political issues?*

Never. Roosevelt, for one, and Truman for another. I thought that Roosevelt would be a good president. I thought he had good ideas to pull the country out of a depression. I thought that Roosevelt probably would have gone down in history as the greatest president that the United States ever had if he'd've quit after the second term.

On local political issues, my brother and I were rarely in the same seat. There wasn't any



great disagreement. He said that the paper's going to support so-and-so, and I'd say, "All right. That's it. I don't agree with you, but we'll go."

*Can you remember any particular time when you thought he had made the wrong choice?*

Well, it was mostly on the local legislators, because he supported some people who I didn't think deserved support from anybody. I won't name them. It turned out that 2 times out of 3, I was right. I can't give you any names. But there were several places that I thought that Al was wrong. I can't think of the discussions that we had, because as far as I was concerned, if the policy of the newspaper was such that so-and-so was to be backed and so-and-so wasn't, I accepted it and went along. I didn't pay too much attention to it. He did the selecting and all of the work to get them in. I accepted his judgment most of the time.

I first met Pat McCarran while he was state judge of the supreme court. I got to know Pat pretty well. He was a self-made politician. He had no party ties—I mean he was a Democrat, that was his situation. He was Democrat and that was it. He was never greatly active in politics in his earlier years. When Goldfield was booming, Wingfield and McCarran were there together, and for some reason Wingfield and McCarran became bitter enemies. I get that from a book that was written several years ago by a daughter of George Springmeyer, who was United States attorney here for many years. [The Unspiked Rail: Memoir of a Nevada Rebel, by Sally Springmeyer Zanjani. Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1981.] I took it as the truth, because Springmeyer's daughter probably knew more about it than I did. Wingfield fought McCarran every time he ran for office, but McCarran was successful

in becoming United States Senator. As United States Senator, he built up his regime here.

*Did your family know the McCarran family?*

No. They were out on a ranch 5 or 6 miles from Reno. At that time 5 or 6 miles meant quite a journey on horse and buggy. Pat was older than Al, and Al was 3 years older than I. When I first knew Pat, he must have been in his middle thirties.

*When did your brother meet McCarran?*

I would say when Pat was a state supreme court judge. I don't think that they had had any great friendship before that time. If this book that Springmeyer's daughter wrote is correct, McCarran was an outcast from the Democratic party. He had to fight his own way up. That's why they say he was a self-made politician.

*In 1932 the Las Vegas State Democratic Convention endorsed McCarran for the Senate.*

I wasn't involved in politics at that time. Al was very active, and McCarran and Al became great friends. Al would contact McCarran in Washington and explain his problems to him, and McCarran would usually take care of the problem. The communication was mostly by telephone. I got some letters from McCarran, and they answered some things that I asked him. He became quite a friend of both Al's and mine. When McCarran died, I was able to go back and go through all his data that he had back in Washington that would be interesting to Las Vegas.

*I have read that the Review-Journal was very interested in McCarran's political career. Could you elaborate on that?*

Any time McCarran ran, the Review-Journal endorsed him. Al would do everything he could to make McCarran's appearance in southern Nevada successful. Pat would come down and check with his lieutenants as to how his political life was going along down here and who he should see and what he should do to make himself more electable. Al was completely sold on McCarran as a very fine senator, and so was I. He was trying to promote the state of Nevada and was trying to break down this north-south deal that was very uppermost in the minds of many people down here at that time.

*Did McCarran ever approach your brother specifically about using the paper for his campaign or to support his programs and ideas?*

He didn't have to; it was taken for granted. As far as I was concerned, as editor, it was taken for granted that when McCarran ran for the Senate, we went all out for him.

*Did he ever send stories from his office that you could use in the paper?*

Oh, yes. He kept us informed on a lot of things that were going on that the general public didn't know about. He would call Al maybe once a month. Any time that either Al or I went back to Washington we were always very welcome in his office.

*What kind of social relationship did you have with McCarran?*

Not too much, because McCarran and I were not at the same place at the same time. My friendship with him grew every time he came down. He'd stop by my desk, and we'd discuss things. It was just a matter of

friendship. We were very interested in the use of scrip out at the company store in Boulder City during the dam construction. Pat got it stopped and made them quit paying off in scrip. That was the main issue that I remember when we got action from Pat. Ed Clark was aging at that time, and Al was a younger man with more vim and vigor than Ed. Ed resigned as national committeeman, and Al was elected as national committeeman for the Democratic party.

*Your brother had a very close relationship with a powerful man. Why didn't he use that as a springboard for a political career?*

I think that Al became disgusted with the Democratic party when Carville double-crossed him. I think that as far as Al was concerned, he was pretty well satisfied with his role down here. He was, along with other people, building a community. He saw that as a much more important deal than being United States Senator.

*So he did adjust to that great disappointment?*

Well, very slowly. I don't think he ever got over it until the day he died. Every once in a while when I'd be talking to him, he'd tell me what an SOB Carville was.

*Many people who have written about McCarran have criticized him for being provincial. He's criticized for putting the state's interests before national interests. Could you comment on that?*

I think that McCarran was a typical Nevadan. He didn't like the control that Washington was trying to put over all of the states of the Union. I think that McCarran was a states' rights man. In fact, I know he was. He'd say that he was a Nevada person and

that he would do as much as he could for the state of Nevada. He put the state first; I don't think there's any doubt about it. McCarran was the main instigator of the battle that beat Roosevelt's plan to pack the Supreme Court. He had no friends in the Roosevelt administration, and yet he was able to do things for the state of Nevada.

*How did your brother handle that conflict between McCarran and Roosevelt in the paper?*

That McCarran was right! Roosevelt at that time was exerting a great influence on the lives of everybody in the United States with his New Deal. I think Al thought the same way I did, that if Roosevelt had quit and not run for a third and fourth term, he would go down as one of the best presidents that we have had. With his New Deal he corrected a lot of things that needed correcting. He had complete control over the United States Senate, except Pat McCarran. Roosevelt was real angry about him beating his proposal to pack the Supreme Court.

*McCarran was quite active in the anti-communist campaigns of the 1950s.*

Oh, yes. Very. I had an opportunity to go through his files in Washington. He had made a drive against the communists and was picking up all the names that were linked to the Communist party. He was very vehement against the communists. He made speeches all over the state and through other states in the Union about communism being a main threat against America. He was worried about it. I didn't know exactly how much McCarran was doing when he was alive. I found out more from his files after he died. There are names in that file that have been linked to the Communist party.

McCarran never had much use for Joe McCarthy. He used to talk to me about him. He'd say, "Just be careful of him, because he's a blowhard. He's got his facts twisted in a lot of cases." I think that they were both going after the same goal. McCarran was a little more careful with his investigation than Joe McCarthy was. McCarthy would go to each department in Washington and try to pick out the communists. It was a great deal of guilt by association. McCarran believed that if they were going to uncover it, they better uncover the truth.

*When you looked at these names in McCarran's files, was there anything about these documents that convinced you that McCarran had sounder reasons for believing that these people were communists?*

Yes. He would give instances of meetings which these people attended. They were all attending these pro-commie meetings. He had a pipeline in Washington that was pretty good. These names were more or less regional figures. They came from the northeast and down the corridor. They were nationally known.

There was a John Birch Society in Las Vegas in the 1950s and 1960s. I don't recall who the people were who belonged to it, but they were the ultraconservative people; they were overly conservative. They didn't make much entrance into politics as far as the state of Nevada was concerned. They were further to the right than the rightists. They had some good things in their political features, but the people who were attracted to the John Birch Society were not the top people of the state of Nevada or the city of Las Vegas.

They would write letters to the editor, and we'd publish the letters that were not clear out in right field. But when they'd get out there

and start in espousing their cause, we'd file them in file 13, which was the wastebasket. We did publish some letters. But the John Birch Society got as bad with their drive for members as the women's rights supporters did with the legislature. They became very adamant that you had to do this and you had to do that. We didn't think that there was anybody in the city of Las Vegas who had to do anything except live. There was no great animation as far as the John Birch Society was concerned. They were on the outer fringe of everything.

Most of the people who had lived in the state of Nevada any length of time were certainly neither in left field nor right field; they were in center field. Usually these people who were in the John Birch Society didn't make any dent or anything in the political scene. There were some who had lived here quite a while. They were of the Busick type, only they were to the right and Busick was to the left. If you put the 2 of them together they'd probably be still battling. Neither one of them made any great advances in the political scene in Las Vegas. I never knew of any conflict that they had with any of the other people. They were just waving the flag and trying to get people to join with them. There were some very prominent people—2 or 3 in the city. I don't want to tag them with the John Birch tag, because they had their beliefs and I had my beliefs, and the 2 of them clashed.

Norm Biltz was a very fine man. He came to Reno during the early part of McCarran's term in office. He was a real estate man in Reno. I think that his wife had quite a lot of money, and they were considered top-drawer in politics and also in social life up there. Very few people knew that Norm was a typical adopted son of Nevada. He became quite heavy in politics in the northern part of the state. He became a typical Nevadan.

He used to fly in people from all over the state: young Jim Cashman from down here and several other people. (I don't think the elder Jim Cashman knew Blitz.) They would go to his cabin at Lake Tahoe and discuss the politics and the economic things in Nevada. They tried to break up this north-south split. Norm did a very good job of getting it started, but when he died the thing went out the window.

I was more acquainted with Norm than my brother was. Every time I'd go up to Reno, he'd have a certain table in the Holiday Hotel that was reserved for "Biltz and his party." Biltz would go over and sit at the table, and the other politicians would drift in and sit down beside him. They'd have a big discussion on the politics and the events of the time—any controversy that was uppermost in the minds of the people, and try to straighten them out. Practically every time I went up as a member of the Board of Regents I was there. I knew Norm quite well.

*What was his official position?*

Had none; he was just a politician. As far as any state politics, he was just Norm Biltz. Of course, any time that the legislature was in session, you always knew something was going to happen when Norm Biltz showed up at the legislature. You never would know what it was. He had quite a lot of juice.

Biltz believed that the economic base of Nevada should be widened past gambling. He wasn't opposed to gambling, but he didn't think that the tail should wag the dog. There was no problem with gambling. You see, he just wanted to widen the base of the economic world in Nevada. It was just that he was interested in seeing the state of Nevada develop. He felt, as many of the other people felt, that we should try and get some industry

into the state of Nevada. They discussed things at these meetings that he had at Lake Tahoe. The people who met with him in Reno would carry the message down here. I think that he was very much impressed with the Southern Nevada Industrial Foundation. Norm was trying to teach young people like young Jim Cashman, who was active down here, the road to success for the state of Nevada. He did a very fine job by just sitting and calling these meetings.

*Can you think of any other people from down here who used to fly up and consult with him?*

I think George Ullom did, maybe Vein Willis. I was not on that inner circle, despite the fact that I knew Norman very well. Vein Willis was. He was in the brokerage business down here, and I think that's the way Biltz got him into the inner circle.

Eddie Questa, who was president of the First National Bank before it became First Interstate Bank, was one of the powerhouses up there in Reno. I think Eddie was a native born Renoite, because he went to school in Reno and was always in the forefront. The Questa family was on the forefront of things that went on in Reno. Eddie was a very powerful influence on the whole state of Nevada through his banking business. They had a branch down here, and they bought out the First State Bank. Questa was much like Wingfield as far as political power is concerned, because he was the head man in the banking business up in Reno, and, of course, controlled the money.

Vail Pittman was the brother of Key Pittman. The first that I knew of Vail, he was running the Ely Daily Times. He was a publisher, and he was quite active in politics. Key interested Vail in politics, and he ran for lieutenant governor. Vail was elevated to

governor, and he finished out the term of the man before him and was reelected. [In 1945 Governor Carville resigned from office and Vail Pittman became governor. Pittman, in turn, appointed Carville to fill the U.S. Senate seat vacated by James Scrugham's death.-ed.]

There was a great controversy when Vail was running for his second full term. Vail was defeated by Charlie Russell. That caused quite a change in the political picture in Nevada, because Russell was a Republican. The previous 3 governors had been Democrats. There was a complete change in the situation as far as politics were concerned when Russell was elected, because he changed a lot of the committees. I had met Vail Pittman in several Nevada Press Association meetings. He used to come down to Las Vegas a couple times a month. Politically I was in back of him and backed him in all of the elections that he ran in. Al and Vail Pittman were very close personal friends. Al was active in the Democratic party and so was Vail. They controlled the southern part of the state politically. They were within the inner ring. Vail always came in to the Review-Journal offices to talk to Al. They talked over things. At the Democratic conventions they were very close, and Al backed him.

*How surprised was your brother when Vail Pittman lost to Russell?*

Oh, very much surprised. In fact, most of the southern part of the state was very surprised that Russell had beaten Pittman. Pittman, I believe carried Clark County by quite a large majority, but it wasn't enough to beat Russell.

*What enabled Russell to be elected? Why do you think Nevada made a change from a Democratic to a Republican governor?*



This we never could figure out. It was much like the defeat of Howard Cannon. Nobody could figure out how it came about, but it did, and that was it.

Governor Charles Russell was a very good friend of mine. I met him in college; he went to school at the same time I did. It was a sort of standoffish friendship. I never was one of his close friends. I was never close enough so that I could do anything, dictate to him or anything. He was just a student up there, and that was it. I believe he was a fraternity man. He was a member of a local fraternity rather than a national fraternity.

There was nothing spectacular about Charlie Russell. He was not a leader at the university. Charlie was more or less of a political accident, too. I've forgotten the circumstances of his election. He beat Vail Pittman. Very few people down here had ever heard of him. How he got elected, nobody seemed to know at the time.

My brother was opposed to Russell. He was in Vail's corner. Al didn't think much of Charlie as a potential governor. He just didn't think Charlie was strong enough. Al wrote editorials on Russell that were flaming red. My brother was on the Colorado River Commission, and when Charlie was elected he didn't reappoint my brother to the commission. There was a feud there that lasted until Charlie and I were on the Centennial Commission for the state of Nevada, 1964. Charlie and I sat down together and I said, "Look, I didn't have any reason to oppose you, and I didn't write the editorials, and I don't want you blaming me for things that appeared on the editorial pages. We worked it out together so that we became very fast friends. Florence was a very, very close friend of Mrs. Russell. She served on the state museum board with Florence. We got along real well together.

*Did your brother's opposition interfere with your relationship with Russell while he was governor?*

I could walk into his office anytime and tell the secretary that John Cahlan was there and liked to see him. If he wasn't busy, he'd tell me to come on in, and we'd discuss some things. He was very cordial to me, but I wasn't somebody who he'd share any secrets with. I'd just drop in to say hello, and we'd talk about whatever developed during the conversation. If there was any news in it, why I picked it up. I'd ask him if it was all right if I published it. He'd either tell me yes or no.

*Do you ever remember feeling you were getting any inside information, inside stories?*

On occasions, yes. I have had Charlie call me in the office and tell me what he was going to do. He wanted me to know so I could put it in the paper. It was self-serving. I knew it, and he knew it.

*Russell is often credited with bringing about a lot of reforms in the state.*

Oh, yes. I think he did a very good job when he was governor. He wasn't an outstanding governor, but he was a good governor.

*Did your brother support the reforms Russell brought about in state government?*

I think so, generally. Al was very critical, of course, and he looked at all the announcements and pronouncements that Russell made and would comment on them. Some of the appointments he made, Al was critical. Al was angry with him because he kicked him off the Colorado River Commission.



I never was able to get very close to Senator Alan Bible. I don't know why. He seemed to be rather cold to me, and I never asked him for very many favors. Usually when any favors were to be asked, I'd ask them through Eva Adams, who was Bible's executive secretary. When McCarran died, she worked for Bible. I think that she had power in Washington that no other woman has had or perhaps will have. Her mother and my mother were very close friends. I went to high school and college with her. She was just about my age. Eva would call every once in a while and give us some inside information. She was a very shrewd woman. She knew all the ins and outs of the political party in Washington. As McCarran's executive assistant, she was very close friends to a majority of the politicians in the Senate. After she left Bible's office she was appointed director of the mint. So, you know that she developed a lot of power right there in Washington.

One of the biggest political fights in the state of Nevada happened when Tom Mechling came into the state. Nobody knows where he came from or where he was going, but they knew that he wanted to be United States senator. He ran against Bible in the 1952 primaries. Bible was one of McCarran's proteges and a very important member of the McCarran ring.

Mechling came in here about the same time that we were having our problems with the left-wingers. We were lighting them pretty good, and we figured that Mechling was that type of a person, because of discussions I had with him, and I know my brother did also. Mechling was trying to get some support from the Review-Journal. He just came over and blatantly asked for it. McCarran was against it. Mechling made a very active campaign. He was in a trailer and went all around the state of Nevada. He was the white knight as

far as a lot of the people were concerned. I can't figure it out, because I never respected the man. It was very easy to see that he was coming out here because he thought it was a small enough state so that he could make his campaign a personal campaign, and he did make his campaign personal. I think he visited everybody in the state. Bible was running for the Democratic nomination, and Mechling beat him. It was a very, very stunning blow to the regime.

*What was your brother's response to Mechling's victory?*

He couldn't figure out how it happened, but there were a lot of people here who were not satisfied with Bible's activities. I don't know why, because, as far as we were concerned, Bible was very, very cooperative.

*Could Bible's association with McCarran . . . ?*

It could have been. Mechling made much of that in his campaign, that Bible was a handmaiden to McCarran, and if you reelected Bible, you'd only have one United States Senator, because Bible would do what McCarran wanted him to.

*Did McCarran have a lot of disgruntled Democrats down here?*

Anybody who gets as much power as Pat McCarran had has enemies. The so-called enemies of McCarran were the same people who brought about the strike in the Review-Journal. When Mechling beat Bible, it was as bad as the San Francisco earthquake. My brother just didn't know what to do. I don't remember any statements. He just thought Mechling was not the guy who he wanted to send back as a senator from the state of

Nevada. Al talked McCarran into coming over to get behind Molly Malone [George W. Malone], who was running on the Republican ticket. McCarran came out and openly endorsed Malone. That's what broke the party right in two. It had a deep effect on the residents of Clark County for many years. The anti-McCarran people said that McCarran had left the Democratic party by endorsing Malone. Malone was a political accident, as far as the truth is concerned. Malone never could have gotten elected had he run against Bible. Malone stayed there 2 terms and was a very good senator. I don't know that he was a native of Nevada, but he's been in Nevada most of his life and knew people.

Later Perle Mesta's nephew came into Nevada and ran for Congress. [William Tyson, Perle Mesta's nephew, sought the Republican nomination for a seat in Congress during Nevada's primary election in 1960. He came in second place to George W. Malone.-ed.] Now, Perle Mesta was "the hostess with the mostest" back in Washington; she was very very active in politics in Washington. All of the people in Congress usually bowed to her thinking. She used to entertain in Washington and put up a big tent and have a barbecue or something and invite all the upperclassmen to her party. She saw the opportunity of getting her nephew elected to Congress if she spent enough money, and she had enough money to buy most anything she wanted. She saw that Nevada was a small state and that if her nephew became well enough known, he could get elected. He bought a creamery in Reno.

Perle Mesta thought she could buy into the Congress and have her boy in where it counts. He made a very active campaign. She came down here and put up her tent in the backyard of some of our neighbors on Charleston and gave this big party. Most of

the Las Vegans who attended had never been to such a soiree. She had the butler open the door and come in and announce the people as they went into the tent. It was quite a party. It was the biggest party that anybody in the city of Las Vegas had seen or will see for quite some time. But he was not elected; he didn't make it. He was another example of how people figured they could control the state of Nevada. They didn't know the Nevada people.

*In the case of Mechling, it is intriguing because he was initially so successful.*

That's right. He was a personable young man. He made a good appearance, and he did the hard work and attacked McCarran. I can't tell you what he was for or against. The community was in a political turmoil at the time. People were for and against McCarran, so they were for or against Mechling, because Mechling was going to unseat McCarran's boy—Bible. Bible was not, at that time, a very good campaigner. This Mechling was a very good-looking man and apparently was able to convince people that they ought to vote for him.

*Does it bother you that someone with such left-wing views could get as far as he did in the state?*

At the time, yes. Now, I look back at it as rather funny, because so many people misread his intent. I think he was going to go against McCarran as much as he could back in Washington, and that he would become the power from the state of Nevada. It was a very peculiar deal, because nobody ever expected Mechling to win. The majority of the people in the state of Nevada didn't think he'd win. I think he won in practically every county.

Florence was sort of reluctant to get into any active role in politics. She was more or less shoved into the Democratic action down here through her brother Cliff and my brother, Al. My brother sent her to all of the county conventions and to all of the preliminary actions. She went as a reporter. After several of the elections, she became interested in certain people in the elective offices. She became a member of the county central committee. Also, she was interested in the Democratic women's activity here. She became quite well known in the political circles and was considered somewhat of a power. Florence never exerted power, but like everything else, people would come to her with their problems. She became more and more interested as the problems gained in depth.

I think that Florence could have been elected to any office that she wanted to run for, but she was perfectly contented to be what she was—a reporter. Her teacher at Missouri was Wafer Williams, one of the better known journalism people. He was quite widely known for his turning out of very good reporters. So she was perfectly happy . . . She got fed up with politics when this women's problem was brought before the electorate—the Equal Rights Amendment. She was very disturbed by the methods that were used by the people who belonged to the National Organization for Women, which was promoting the Equal Rights. They were very adamant in their activities. I mean, "You do this or else." They were making threats all over the state. They'd go to the legislature and corner one of the senators who they knew was against the Equal Rights Amendment and just punch them in the chest while they were talking to them and make threats about how they'd beat them at the next election. Florence just could not understand that controversy.

She wasn't very much interested in getting into controversy. Florence was against the Equal Rights Amendment, because she thought that the state could make the law. The law would be better for the state of Nevada because it was passed by Nevada people who had studied the problem. She was one of the people who was affected by women not being paid equal money for equal work.

*How did her salary compare to a man of her position?*

Very poorly, but she was willing to sacrifice for a job. She wasn't exactly happy about it, and we finally got it somewhere around equal. But the people at the Review-Journal—and as I say this, I don't want anybody to think that I am biased—didn't appreciate the work that she had been doing and how she had made friends for the paper. I talked to Al on several occasions as to her salary and my salary. We finally got them up . . . I didn't get them up to where they should be, but we got them raised.

Florence got acquainted with the real inside of politics, because she found out how campaigns were waged and how much was being promised that couldn't be brought to fruit. [Florence Cahlan was campaign manager for Eugenia Claire Smith in southern Nevada when Smith sought the Democratic nomination for a seat in Congress in 1954.—ed.] The thing that she used to get the biggest kick out of: Eugenia Claire was the heir of Yuban coffee; she was loaded with money, and she wasn't afraid to wear it at any of her functions. Florence said that she used to go to the conventions and the meetings all decked out in furs and jewelry you couldn't buy for less than \$12,000 apiece—necklaces and rings. Eugenia Claire didn't know what politics was all about. Florence would take her to meetings,

and she'd make the darnedest mistakes about what Florence had told her to say.

*Why did Florence agree to this job?*

You had to take another job to live on the salary that you were getting. She was paid quite well for running the campaign.

*Did she personally support Smith?*

No! She said Mrs. Smith was so dumb that everybody'd cut her up if she got back there. Florence was not completely sold on her job. She was doing it as a job. Somebody had to do it; if she couldn't do it, it wouldn't get done.

Eugenia was beaten terribly in the state of Nevada, but she carried Clark County. That was a result of Florence's activity with Eugenia Claire. Nobody down here knew her, but they knew that if Florence was backing her, she must have something. It was something that I think Florence regretted. She never told me this, but I think she regretted the activity because of the kind of person Eugenia Claire was. She wasn't a candidate that Florence would vote for. Eugenia Claire Smith didn't have an original idea in her mind. She just wanted to be a Congresswoman. I think she was vying with Perle Mesta. She wanted to be in the same position as Perle Mesta was socially. If she was a Congresswoman, she'd get that kind of publicity. It's probably just as well that she wasn't elected, because she never had an original idea in her mind all the time I knew her!

From the early 1950s through 1965 I worked in the legislature as a liaison for the Chamber of Commerce. I covered 5 regular sessions and 2 special sessions. They would meet every 2 years, and they had special sessions on separate occasions. I got to know all of the senators and all of the assemblymen.

At that time John Mueller would always claim that he was the "eighteenth senator." Each county had a senator, and we have 17 counties. He claimed he was the senator of the "eighteenth county." He could manipulate the legislature; he did a pretty good job. He was more or less of a lobbyist. When he left, I inherited his mantle.

I worked closely with all of the people up there. They had a building code deal that they wanted to pass. One of the legislators in the assembly asked me if I'd go over and listen to the hearing that they had on it. I went over to where they were having the hearing. I was convinced that it was a very bad deal, because nobody could read the thing before the legislature adjourned. It was about 3 inches thick, and that's a lot of reading. I went back and reported to the assemblyman who sent me over, and they didn't consider it. They put it on hold until the next session of the legislature. I wasn't up there at that next session, so I don't know what became of it.

I would do little favors for the people in the legislature. I became very friendly with most of them. There were just little things that they couldn't do at the time, and I was sort of a gofer. I went for things that they needed and couldn't get away to do. I ingratiated myself to the members of both the senate and assembly. As a result I became quite influential in a lot of the things that were done.

As an example, the Chamber of Commerce was interested in a finance bill. I've forgotten what the finance bill was, but it had something to do with financing the city. I was close to the assembly Ways and Means Committee. I got a telephone call from Las Vegas, all in a heat. The secretary of the Chamber of Commerce said that we were going to go down to defeat; we were going to lose the bill. I said, "Listen, I just returned from a meeting with the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee."

(This was on a Saturday.) We sat around in the assembly chambers and hit this bill around. I was there giving them advice and giving them my advice and letting them take it if they would. We worked something out so this bill would take care of everything that the Chamber of Commerce wanted. When I was talking with the secretary of the Chamber of Commerce down here I said, "Don't worry about the thing. Everything is all taken care of." He just couldn't be convinced, because another one of the legislators who was on the Ways and Means Committee had given him a big defeatist attitude. I said, "Well, wait until Monday, and I'll let you know what happened, but don't worry about it, because it's going to pass." And sure enough, when it came up, it passed. I was there.

I was more or less an advisor to members of the legislature, because I had time to read the bills and find out what was going on. I could explain to them the bills as they came up. I'd call the Chamber of Commerce on the telephone every 3 or 4 days and tell them what bills were interesting to the Chamber. If there was any definite battle over some bill, I would call them and tell them they'd better get some representatives up there; they were having hearings and they should be up there for the hearings. I always had free rein as far as the legislature was concerned. When the hearings were held, if they had representatives up at the hearings, they would be able to present their case and have a better chance of a bill that they were interested in passing. I kept track of bills that they were interested in. When there were going to be hearings, I let them know. They'd fly somebody up before the hearings.

*Were there any disagreements between your point of view and that of the Chamber of Commerce?*

No. I was sort of an advisor to 2 of the most powerful people in the legislature—Melvin B. "Bode" Howard and Ray Knisley. They were quite powerful in the legislature and the assembly, and they sought my advice quite often. They could tell you whether a bill was going to pass or whether it wouldn't. They were the power center of the legislature.

*Was Floyd Lamb a powerful man?*

Yes. He was the powerhouse of the entire legislature. As far as he was concerned, he was interested in the state of Nevada and did more for Clark County than any other legislator who's been up there. I can't give you specifics, but he was interested in the development of Clark County, and he had been there many years. He was one of the elder statesmen of the senate. I had known him quite well down here. In fact, he and my brother-in-law Cliff built a roping corral out on Charleston Boulevard in back of my house. We had been very friendly. I could get most anything out of Floyd that was legitimate.

I sat in on many of the Finance Committee meetings, and everybody else was barred; they wouldn't let them in. I just was there to learn and also to give advice, if they asked me. Floyd was chairman of the Finance Committee. His committee had the authority over all of the financial bills that came up. They discussed them and whether they should pass or should not pass at their recommendation. Usually the senate and the house would take the recommendation of either the finance chairman or the Ways and Means Committee chairman.

I was just an "observer." After Johnny Mueller left, I was an "advisor." It was just things that I could steer through the legislature through my friendship and their knowledge of my background. They were



willing to take on my advice and study it. There wasn't anything that I took as much interest in as I did the State Archives bill. A lot of those bills, I would tell people what I thought of them, and they'd talk it over and either take my advice or throw it away.

They did pass a bill for the centennial celebration of Nevada statehood. I got that bill passed. Grant Sawyer appointed me as the executive director of it, and I served for 2 years, from 1961 to 1963. My ideas didn't go over with the Board of Governors. I saw there was no chance of putting on any kind of a large celebration throughout the state with the committee that I had, so I resigned. It was another one of these north-south battles. The controlling interests were all in Reno, and they didn't want any celebration except to have an Indian dance up on Carson Street on Admission Day. I had other ideas that would have worked out, like putting out wooden money and doing things that were in some way authentic to the centennial. I tried to get buildings preserved and got some built.

The first that I knew of any records that they had in the legislature was when I went in to Johnny Koontz's office. He was secretary of state, and he told me he wanted to show me something. He took me down in the basement of the capitol building and showed me that all the minutes of the legislature and all of the records of the convention which preceded the admission of Nevada into the Union were lying around stuck in places—underneath steam pipes. One of the most important documents was the minutes of the first session of the legislature. The steam pipe had leaked and burned a hole in the cover that went through about 18 pages of the convention, which was a great loss. I decided that something should be done. So Johnny and I put together a bill to establish a state archives. That bill was introduced into

the legislature, but it didn't pass. I would say that was when I first went up there in about 1950. Each session that I went to, Johnny and I would try to get this archives thing put together.

I was the executive director of the Nevada Centennial Commission from 1961 to 1963. The legislature had voted \$100,000 to pay for the events of the centennial deal. About 1963 I resigned and went into public relations. In 1965 the legislature returned some \$25,000 that was left out of the \$100,000 that was voted by the legislature for the centennial. We revived the bill that Johnny Koontz had drawn up setting up the archives. I took it to Floyd Lamb, who was chairman of the Finance Committee of the senate. He said, "Well, if you can find the money, we'll vote the archives. But I know that if we vote the archives, it's going to cost us money in the future, and it's going to cost more money each year." I agreed with him, but I didn't say so.

I had found out that the \$25,000 had been returned to the state from this centennial celebration. I went to Floyd, and I said, "All right, Floyd, you told 'me if I could find the money, you'd give me the bill.'" I said, "You go down and check this with the treasurer and see if there isn't \$25,000 that was put back into the state coffers, and it was unappropriated." He went down and checked with them, and he found out. As a result, I got the bill passed which set up the archives system.

I do remember that when I was trying to get the bill passed, when it was in the senate, everybody voted against it. But then one man got up and said he wanted to change his vote, so the rest of the senate changed their votes, and the bill passed unanimously. That was more or less of a joke on me. They wanted to show me, I guess, how a bill can be defeated and then have it passed. Of course, as all government agencies do, it has been



expanding and expanding until they've got quite a staff up there. It has retained a lot of the old relics of the convention.

*Did Florence take an interest in this project?*

No. That's my project. After it was passed, she was very interested in it. As of now, they've got all of the records of the Nevada state government from the time it was formed.

It is a tragedy that Floyd Lamb got into the jam on the bribery thing. [Clark County Senator Floyd Lamb was indicted in 1983 by a Las Vegas federal grand jury of attempted extortion after taking money from an undercover FBI agent to secure a loan through the Public Employees Retirement System. Lamb was sentenced in 1984 to a 3-year prison term. After serving 9 months, Lamb was parolled in January of 1985 due to ill health.—ed.] I think Floyd didn't consider the fact that he was being bribed. Floyd told me that this guy who got all the dope on him and paid him the money was living at his house. Floyd said, "He used to call me Pappy." He ingratiated himself up to a point where he gave Floyd the money, and Floyd stuffed it in his shirt. They had the video tape going all the time; they got that on record. But Floyd Lamb did as much for the state of Nevada as any senator from Lincoln County and Clark County or any other senator who was sent up here. Floyd was rather a naive guy as far as any friendship was concerned. He was much like a lot of Nevadans—if they shook hands and made a deal, that was a deal. Floyd couldn't read character. It was a shame, because I'm sure that if I had been out there, he'd never have had this trouble, because Floyd and I were very close.

Floyd's out of prison. He's up at his ranch in Pahranaagat. He had heart trouble. It was not feigned. I knew that he was having

problems with his heart before this ever happened. Floyd was just caught in a net that he spun himself. He just went on and felt that this guy was a friend of his, that everything would be all right.

*Can you remember some of his achievements?*

The girls' school. The home for wayward girls was brought down to southern Nevada through Floyd's efforts and was established at Panaca. It has been a very big boon to Panaca because that valley had just gone dead. There's no people up there. They had to have some basis of existence. It was a railroad town to start with. The railroad pulled all their men out and left the depot. They don't stop up there any more. It was a dying county, and Floyd revived that. He was also more or less responsible for the Catholic nuns' school down here for wayward girls. Through Florence's request and drive, he was responsible for that. He was chairman of the Finance Committee for years. Any way that he could finagle any money out of the state for southern Nevada, he did. He was a very fine senator. It's a tragedy that he got trapped as he did. I think that it was a trap that got him his problem. Floyd and I got along real well together. He was one of my close supporters [with the archives bill].

Howard Cannon came in here from Panaca. He came down here, and he was married in my mother-in-law's house. I knew him very well. He was elected city attorney of Las Vegas and served for several years. In 1958 he went to Carson City with the idea of filing for attorney general. Just before the filing closed, he changed his mind and filed for the Senate, and he was elected. He served for quite a few years as the Senator from Nevada.

Cannon's relationship with the power structure in Las Vegas was very good. He

was city attorney and had a great deal to do with the development of the community because of the appointments on the planning commission and that type of stuff. He was regarded quite well. Everybody thought that he would be in the Senate as long as McCarran had been there, but he got beat.

Cannon was not as close to my brother as he was to me. He came to me on several occasions to ask for information and advice on anything that was climaxing at that time. When I went back to Washington, I'd stop in at his office. One of the reasons that I stopped into his office was that one of the men on his staff was this kid who worked for me at the Review-Journal as a reporter—Chet Sobsey. Jack Conlon, who was Cannon's executive secretary, became one of the top men in the Executive Secretaries Association that they had back there in Washington. I think he served as president one year. We used to get along real well together. Florence was very close to Howard's wife.

Howard Cannon was for anything that was to benefit the state of Nevada. He always fought for the people of the state and was a very good Senator. After the dam was built and they had controversy over the division of the water, he was all for the people of the state. He did a very good job as a Senator. He was thought of as being there until he died, but he made several mistakes in his last campaign. One of them was that he forgot who got him elected, just cut off the relationship between his old friends and his new friends.

His old friends were Al Cahlan, the young Jim Cashman. (He was coming up as a member of a political family.) He wouldn't come in and say hello to them. He'd just leave them alone. There was one man I knew who was very close to Howard prior to the time he changed his loyalty from his old friends to his new friends. Cannon came in to see if

he could get some money from this man, and the man said, "Well, Howard, I'm not going to work for you or give you any contributions, because you used to come in and see me all the time, but I haven't seen you for the last 2 years." That was just the way that it happened.

Cannon transferred his loyalties to Frank Scott and Zack Taylor of First Western Savings. Zack Taylor was a former commander out at the air base. Frank Scott was quite well respected in the business world. I don't say anything against either Scott or Zack Taylor; they're both very good friends of mine. It was just a situation where Cannon thought they could do more for him than his old friends could. I had one man who was high in politics tell me that it didn't make any difference who ran against Howard; he was going to get beat. It was just that he'd left all of his old friends and went with new. I found this out from various friends of mine who gave me the word.

During the campaign Chic Hecht, who was running against him, never said a word on TV. It was always somebody else who was talking as they showed pictures of Hecht walking down the street in Carson City as state senator. I called Chet Sobsey and I said, "Look, buster, you'd better get in and start working against Hecht. If you don't, Howard's going to get beat. There's a very easy way of doing it. Just ask who is talking for Hecht, because he hasn't said anything on the issues. He hasn't said anything—practically nothing on TV." And that was true.

Hecht was known as a state senator who did a good job. He kept his mouth shut and didn't make any great moves in the Senate. He was never an outstanding senator in the state. This man that told me that the skids were greased for sending Cannon out of office. I asked him why, and he said, "Well, I can't tell you, but I know that it's so." So there was a lot

of opposition to Cannon, which was, in my estimation, a very tragic thing for the state of Nevada. Hecht never said anything that was of any great moment in the state senate; he hasn't said anything of great moment in the national Senate. He has made a lot of statements about this atomic dumpsite. Whoever is advising him, according to the people that I know—and I've known people from Groves clear down to some of the laborers up there—Hecht doesn't know what he is talking about. That's one instance, and there have been 2 to 3 others. He has been on the wrong side of a lot of political and other items that have affected the state of Nevada.

The first time I knew Paul Laxalt was when he was playing basketball for Carson City High School. I was scorekeeper for the state basketball tournament. Paul was from Carson City, and I knew him other ways. He was raised in Carson City. His family was a Basque family, and his father was a sheepherder in the state, around Lovelock. Paul grew up just loving the state of Nevada, as his father had brought him up. His father, according to Paul, used to tell him stories about the development of the state of Nevada. He was a true Nevadan. Paul was a very personable young man and a good-looking young fellow and made friends very easily. His election as governor in 1966 was hailed all over the state as a real fine job. When Paul all of a sudden made up his mind to do something, he did it.

I was the first one to know that Paul wasn't going to run for governor again in 1970. We were coming back from New York after one of the Southern Nevada Industrial Foundation trips. Paul and I sat together all the way from New York to Salt Lake City. We were talking politics and things of that sort. He said, "You know, Johnny, I am not going to run for governor again."

And I said, "Why not?"

He said, "Well, I've been in political life ever since I was 21, 22 years old. I served in the attorney general's office for so many years, and I served as governor, and it's just too much."

He didn't file for governor. That was the first time that I or anybody else knew that he wasn't going to file for governor. He was going back to practicing law in Carson City. He said he wanted to keep his hands in politics, but he wasn't going to run for office. Later, his decision not to run for another term as United States Senator just upset the whole state of Nevada, because most of the Republicans and the Democrats were very favorable to Paul. He became quite a power in Washington. He was the third man on the totem pole as far as power in Washington was concerned! Reagan, the vice-president, then Laxalt. Laxalt was a very close friend of Reagan.

*In the Cahlan papers over at the Nevada State Museum, there's rather a surprising letter or article that you wrote. It's critical of Laxalt.*

We often had disagreements. Paul wasn't exactly stubborn, but he was fixed in his ideas. But my association with him was very good. I knew him probably as well as anybody who wasn't in his own personal circle.

*It looks to me as though this letter was something that was not sent; it's just a personal expression.*

Oh! I wrote a report for the Republicans down here about "tall Paul Laxalt." This is my assessment of him. He did about the same thing that Cannon did. He transferred his loyalties from one bunch of people to another bunch of politicians. Two of the very hardest workers for him down here, Paul just turned around and left them—Waft Casey and Paul McDermott, who were friends of mine. I

showed the article to both Paul and Walt, and they approved it. They said it was all right and should be filed somewhere. Paul never saw the article. It was just written for history. I was very friendly with Paul. I have a picture of Paul in my scrapbook, and it has a very nice note before the signature. He and I were always good friends.

I said in this article that the Republican party had been severely damaged by Paul's activity down in Southern Nevada and that it would wreck the Republican party. Well, that did not turn out to be. It was just something that I wrote as a sense of history. I think at the time that it was right, exactly right But as it has turned out, the Republican party has surged way ahead of the Democratic party in state activities. Paul's been a very fine Senator. Any time that I wanted anything I had no problem when I talked to Paul or wrote him.

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## SOME THOUGHTS ON THE PROVISION OF WATER FOR LAS VEGAS

Florence and I were the second people to live in the Charleston Boulevard area. Buck Blame, who worked on the dam and later became a part of the Golden Nugget, was the first one to build out there. At that time there was nothing out there at all, from the railroad tracks west. He built his house and he put it back about 200 yards and put a fruit orchard in the front of it. It was before the war.

There was no water out there except a well that Blame and my brother-in-law Cliff Jones had drilled. A couple of other people who were on the other side of Charleston Boulevard went together and bought the pipeline that ran from the Union Pacific corrals out to the county hospital, which was about 4 or 5 blocks west of where we had our house. The area now is occupied by one of the state agencies, and they have quite a large development over there.

I decided to make Charleston Boulevard the orange grove avenue. We got everybody to build their houses 200 feet back of the street and put in lawns and flower beds. For quite

some time after the war, that was one of the beauty spots, because the people did take care of their lawns, and they grew their flowers. It became a semi-orange grove avenue, I would say. Now it's practically all occupied by business. Originally, it was ranches. That was one of the reasons that Las Vegas was named Las Vegas—the meadows—because that area was all in ranches. They grew a lot of alfalfa and made it green. When the explorers came in here, they decided that it should be Las Vegas. In literal translation that is “the meadows.” It's not really the meadows; it's the green spot. So that's how Las Vegas got its name. All of this area that we're living in now was nothing but desert—mesquite trees and quail bush and that sort of land covering.

The Las Vegas Land and Water Company, a subsidiary of the Union Pacific, had control of the sale of lots in the community, and also the providing of water before the city was incorporated. The Union Pacific had an agreement with the Las Vegas Land and Water Company that they would provide

water for the original Clark's town site, which was from Stewart over to Bonneville and from Main to Fifth Street, which now are the Las Vegas Boulevards, north and south. That was all that they were supposed to serve. As the town grew, the railroad saw some big problems ahead. They were going to have to supply water to all of the growing areas. It was decided by the people of Las Vegas that they should take over the water system and provide water for any of these new developments that were coming in. I know that the Chamber of Commerce voted to do that, because without water there would be no development. I think that the city and county commissions were favorable. They never fought it. They had an election here at the time; it was a double election as I recall it. They passed the bill that would set up the Las Vegas Valley Water District, and also elected trustees of the district. That is how it came into being.

*You told me in our discussion of BMI that the government was persuaded to widen the pipe from Lake Mead to BMI so that . . .*

That was through Eells. He was supposed to put in the pipeline that brought in water from the lake to Basic Magnesium. Johnny Mueller, my brother and Eells got together and said that as long as we're building this pipeline, it doesn't make any difference whether they built it at whatever size was indicated by the government. Have it expanded and give the city of Las Vegas a chance to tap into that water. The first water that was brought in to Las Vegas from the lake came out of that pipe.

*Do you think that the government understood they were building a pipe that was to service Las Vegas, or didn't it matter?*

I don't think it mattered. They were in a hurry to get the plant in operation. As far as any details were concerned, I don't think the government was interested. I think Truman's committee came out here and investigated the overall cost and operation of the plant. I doubt very much whether Truman's committee were told about the pipeline. The fact of the matter is that as far as the people were concerned, we stole the water. It wouldn't have been possible at that time for the Las Vegas Valley Water District to construct the pumping plant out at the lake and the pipe that went into the Basic Magnesium. That would have been just too big a problem.

*You have mentioned Walter Bracken and George Ullom in the past. Were these 2 men involved with the water district?*

Walter Bracken was the Union Pacific representative in Las Vegas. He was the first postmaster and a lot of other things for the Union Pacific. He was sort of a czar as far as the Union Pacific operation in Las Vegas-Las Vegas Land and Water Company. He had quite a lot of authority in the development of Las Vegas from 1905 until the strike in 1922. He didn't have anything to do with the Las Vegas Valley Water District after that. He was completely Union Pacific. From the time the city was made, Bracken was in charge. In 1922 whether he lost some of his authority . . . I suppose he did, because the Union Pacific moved most of their operation to Milford. He lived here until he died. He was part of the development of the community.

George Ullom and I were very friendly. He's a native Las Vegas, and he has had several very important jobs. He now is registrar of voters. During the time that I knew him, he



was on the police department here, and he also became city manager. He was elected to the water district board and was responsible for revamping the rates of the water, because at that time there was a terrible uprising against what was being paid for water in the city. He had a great deal to do with the selling of the Henderson BMI plant.

Al wasn't as close to George as I was. When I was Grand Exalted Ruler of the Elks Lodge, George was Exalted Ruler of the local lodge. He and I made a trip around the state together and visited all of the lodges in the state. I got acquainted with him then. From the time he was a policeman, I knew George. He's a very intelligent man, and he's done a great deal on the voter registration—getting it straightened around so that you can get the votes counted. It used to be that when I was in Reno you never were able to find out who'd been elected, because Clark and Lincoln County votes hadn't come in. In any close election Clark County and Lincoln County could have brought about an upset in the voting. He had straightened that out as a result of my brother's setting up a network where they could collect the votes and get them up to Reno and Carson City by midnight. We had no telegraphy between here and Reno, and the mail was occasional. There was no long distance telephone service. My brother sent that up, and then Ullom made it better; he went along.

When George Ullom went on the Water Board, he was the one who figured out the rates that should be charged by the district to the people for their water. He was the one that had the meters put in. Metering was a problem—nobody wanted to be metered. It was about the same time that they were going to meter the parking in Las Vegas,

and everybody was opposed to meters. But, when they studied Ullom's plan, they found out that the water would cost them less than it had under the plan that they'd been working under. So he was quite influential in developing water at a nominal rate.

I think that we advocated the metering of water in editorials. It was not an important part of the editorial page, but every once in a while we'd hit them with the fact that water was worth whatever you had to pay for it. We took that attitude, because you can't get along without any water. If it had to be metered, that was it.

Prior to the time that the Las Vegas Valley Water District was formed and taken over from the Union Pacific, we were rationing water here in the summertime. At that time these evaporative coolers had come into use here, and most every house in town had them. There were times when the reservoir—the only reservoir that they had—was way down and we had to ration water. One side of the street had water on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and the other ones across the street took water on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday.

*Did people resist the idea of the water district itself?*

Not the water district. They were just mad that they had to have meters. When Bracken was running the Las Vegas Land and Water District, it cost \$2.50 month. That was about the cheapest water that you could get anywhere in the desert.

*Water is an issue all over the Southwest, and it raises all sorts of questions. Do you think that Las Vegas can compete for water against other areas, like Phoenix and Los Angeles?*

The water in the Colorado River has been allocated by a water master appointed by the president. The district took in the 7 lower basin states and also the upper basin states. It was a tremendous task to get that water allocated properly. The state of Nevada was given 300,000 acre feet of water. When that is gone—when we start in getting close to that figure—we're going to have to find more water. The manager of the water district tells me that we're not using as much water as we are allocated. And it could be—I'm not predicting that this is going to happen—but it could be that if we don't start using the water, California and Arizona will jump in and want to take it.

You've got to have water in the desert. This being a desert, naturally we're going to have to have more water when we run out of Lake Mead water and also of artesian water. The water table in the valley has sunk. I think the last I heard, it has sunk some 5 to 10 feet. You used to be able to go down about 2 feet and hit water. Now, whether that was surface water or artesian water, I don't think anybody paid any attention; it was just water. If we don't get any more water, you're going to see a ban put on building and any expansion. Now, they tell me that there is water out in the Sheep Mountain Range, but to get it, you have to go quite deep, and it'll cost money to pump it out and pump it into the system. That is going to have to be inspected to find out if there is water out there. The survey that the government made, when they were talking about putting in some secret thing out at the test site, showed that there is water available here if we can drill it. But that is speculating entirely. I doubt very much, even if they have to go deep out at Sheep Mountain, that the cost of water in the future would be such that it would be prohibitive for growth. I think that

Phoenix, Arizona and those areas have higher water rates than we do.

*Do you think that it makes sense to encourage or allow unrestrained growth in areas where water is scarce? In other words, do you think growth should be discouraged in certain areas where it is very difficult to secure water?*

Let me say this: when you put in a hotel like the MGM-Bally Hotel—you've set up a new community. I've forgotten how many rooms they have out there, but each one is using water, showers, toilets. It is a new community when you say that you've got a thousand people in the hotel.

*Are you concerned about any long-term ecological damage that could result from exploiting underground water and the Colorado River?*

No, I don't think so. As far as these fears of the atomic waste going into the water from the Yucca Flats, I don't think that there's any possible chance. I have talked to several engineers from the Department of Energy and the Atomic Energy Commission when they were in here, and they say there's no possibility, that those containers are built to last for a thousand years.

*People who are interested in the natural state of the area have been critical of the number of dams that have been built. Are you worried about that?*

No, I am not. They were going to build another dam on the Colorado River—I've forgotten where it was, but it was above Lake Powell—and I think the government has dropped that plan because of the allocation

of the water. I'm not particularly concerned about them building any more dams on the river because I think they've got that river over-controlled now.

Mexico was fighting for their portion of the water, which is not being supplied, according to the treaty that was made. The water is being used in the United States. I'm not sure that Mexico doesn't get any, but it doesn't get what they were supposed to.

There hasn't been any great amount of debate among the states recently. The allotment has been made, and that's it. California has tried to get more water and more power, but Arizona and Nevada have been battling ever since the dam was completed. California is trying to grab off all they can, because if they don't get more water down in Los Angeles, Los Angeles is going to have to put clamps on growth.

I'm a little pessimistic about it for us, too because if we don't get another source of water, we're going to have to put a clamp on expansion. That may come in 5 years; it may come in 20 years. I don't think that the problems are insurmountable, but they'll be costly. It all depends on how much it'll cost to produce the water.

*Flooding is a big issue today. Has that always been a problem in the valley?*

Look up at the Charleston Mountains and see all of those chasms up there. You could find out that that is the runoff of water. Whether that has been rainwater or what over a period of years, I'm not sure. But this flood control is going to be tough, because the water, from wherever it's coming, is going to have to get to the river. It always has, and it always will. If you dam it up one place, it's going

someplace else to get out. Engineers have told me that there is absolutely no possibility of stopping those floods. Let's take, for instance, Charleston Boulevard: every time you have a rainstorm here, the Charleston underpass is filled with water because Charleston is one of the main arteries for this water to get out. Whether they can change the force of the water in the proper places, I am a little worried about it. Not worried—I just don't think that they can. This water is developed from the cloudbursts that hit this entire valley. You have read in the paper where it comes down from the Charleston Mountains; it comes down into Henderson; it comes down into North Las Vegas. The washes there are big washes that have been there for centuries.

*Do you remember any major floods in your early years in the valley?*

Yes. We usually had cloudbursts in August and September, year after year after year. This year—I 1986—has been a rather dry year, and we've had none of those floods. But I can remember that down in the eastern part of town the government came in here and built houses. They built them across the streets which are the main arterials for the floods. People down there have had to, at times, open their front and back doors and let the water run through the house.

When we were living over on Charleston Boulevard, they had 2 or 3 floods that came down Charleston. Charleston is one of the main outlets, and the development on the western part of town has funneled that water into Charleston Boulevard. There's a wash out there at the Spanish Trails. One of the main washes that we have in Las Vegas goes right through the golf course. That runs down to the golf course in the eastern part of town.

That is usually washed out every time they have a flood.

When Caesar's Palace was built, the people who were investing in it and the contractors were told that they should not build in the wash that runs right alongside the hotel in the parking lot. When they had the most recent bad flood, the automobiles that were in the parking lot were carried down halfway to the dam. People just don't understand the power of flood water. They go out and see all of this beautiful weather that we have, and they never see the results of the flood, or they don't look at it. As a result they build in the wrong places. I think that somebody's going to have to make some sort of a law that they can't build in these washes.

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## THE OLD ORDER PASSES: REFLECTIONS ON THE NATURE OF TRUE NEVADANS AND CHANGES IN THE LAS VEGAS COMMUNITY

In the 1950s, we were still welcoming new citizens into the community. As far as the paper was concerned, we were interested in building the community. I would say that the changes came after these new people had been here maybe 4 or 5 years. Change was gradual. The people who had been kids when their parents were in power grew up, and they entered the power scene.

The Matteusi boy's father had been here for quite some time, and he was a local boy. He became the county chairman for the Democratic party. Then you had young people like my brother-in-law Herb Jones, Louie Wheeler . . . . People of that type whose families had been in the community quite some time, had a good reputation, were accepted into the power center, if they wanted to be in there. It was more or less ruling by the young sons or the daughters of people who had been pioneering in the Las Vegas Area. Young Jim Cashman assumed a lot of the power that his father had, and Tona Cashman was active in the social circles. Bob Brown was another one. His mother was very active

in politics. He followed in her footsteps and became justice of the peace and then became a state senator from Clark County and served many years. He was one of the stalwarts of the senate. It was people like that. The torch was passed from the older member of the family down to the younger.

Early in the history of Las Vegas, a lot of the kids from here went down to California to go to college, and others went to Utah, where they went to college. Not very many of those who went away to college came back, because at that time there were no opportunities. Las Vegas was still a railroad town, but those who stayed made good records. By the 1950s that had changed. Many of the kids went up to the University of Nevada at Reno instead of going elsewhere to go to college. Those who went up to Reno returned to Las Vegas and remained in Nevada.

Bill Morris is an example. I got Bill a scholarship to the university, and he played football up there. He came back here and became quite a widely known lawyer. He now is the owner of the Landmark Hotel.

His family was not prominent in the first generation. I've forgotten what his mother did, but he pulled himself up by his own bootstraps.

The Earls went up to Utah and got their education and came back here. Ira Earl was the county commissioner, and Marion Earl was a widely-known attorney. They have brothers, and some of their grandchildren are coming up now. The Earl family was quite prominent in the operations of the LDS church. Marion Earl doesn't have any children, but Ira Earl has children, and they're in legal firms now. There are quite a few who are now quite prominent themselves.

*Did your family contribute to that second generation? Beyond your brothers-in-law have any other members of the Jones clan become community leaders?*

Cliff and Herb both were very active in civic things and political things. My brother's son was active in politics for quite some time. Forrest is his given name, but he's known as Frosty. A story was told that he was named after the doctor who delivered him. The doctor who delivered him was Forrest Mildren, and he was known as Frosty, so when they named Frosty after Forrest Mildren it actually went into Frosty. He was an attorney, and he was active in the community. He was in politics.

Al had a daughter, Marion, who is back at Mt. Ayr now. She was named after my mother—her grandmother. She married a man from Nellis Air Force Base who was here during the war. She was active socially, but not politically.

I took a rather dim view of the civil rights movement of the 1960s. The people of the state of Nevada believed that states' rights went above everything else, so they worked on that situation rather than get into any civil

rights battles. I viewed it in more or less the same way as all the rest of the states did, that it was the state's right to give everybody else rights. These days you have so many rights I don't know what's left. You've got civil rights and women's rights and dog rights. Everything has a right, but they don't have any responsibility behind them. That was one of the things that worried me at the time they were going on. How far was it going, and wasn't it wrecking the old truisms of the United States of America? I think very definitely that one of the worst enemies the United States had was Earl Warren, who was chief justice of the Supreme Court. To me, he was part of the left.

*What particular rulings did you disagree with?*

The civil rights for one thing; one man, one vote was another. Right now the voters in my district have no control over the other districts in the state. I felt that it was my right to see who was elected to the entire legislature, rather than only the one who I have in this district. I favored at-large elections.

*Do you recall any difficulties in Las Vegas during the 1960s civil rights movement?*

It was mostly the ACLU that was stirring up these problems. Any time that anybody would get arrested for shooting somebody and be thrown in jail, one of the ACLU people would come down and say, "His civil rights have been violated. It's not good; he's not guilty because his rights have been violated." As far as the racial conflicts were concerned, there weren't any that I remember. They did eliminate the segregation in the theaters and the hotels, and that was accepted in the state. The state of Nevada is pretty liberal as far as the rights of people are concerned.



There had been attempts made by many people in several sessions of the legislature to pass corporate gambling provisions of the law. They figured that the corporations would come in here and they would get people like Hilton, and that they would develop the community with the profits from the gambling. They finally won the legislature over. [The definitive corporate licensing act was passed in 1969.-ed.] But the idea of corporate gambling just turned around and bit them, because the corporate structure does not seem to be interested in supporting anything except their own hotels. The people who work for them have become more or less indoctrinated in that theory. As far as the corporations are concerned, the only thing that interests them is the bottom line. If the bottom line turns into red ink, the managers are gone. It's not all of them, but it's a majority of them, who are not interested in anything except running that hotel at a profit.

I wasn't too familiar as to what would be the result of corporate gambling. I was out of the newspaper business at that time, and I hadn't studied it too much. I felt if Hilton and the rest of these corporations want to come in here and run the hotels, that's fine. I thought we'd get good results from it.

Through several sessions of the legislature this corporate gambling was backed by the people who were promoting it. It had been discussed, and the people were not unprepared for such a notion. It just backfired, because a majority of the managers in the hotels were looking at their jobs, which were pretty good paying jobs. They were looking at the safety of their jobs with the corporation, because if they didn't produce, they were out.

I supported corporate gambling at the time the bill was passed. As far as the Southern Nevada Industrial Foundation and the Chamber of Commerce were concerned,

I think they both supported the industry, but there was quite a lot of local opposition, because the bill failed the first 2 or 3 times. I don't recall anybody specifically. It was people who were in business here and were afraid that if the corporations came in here they'd gobble up the whole city. Small operators were against it because that would affect them. As far as the smaller interests are concerned, they are being squeezed out because of your hotels that have dining rooms. The food and the atmosphere can't be equalled anywhere in the world, for that matter.

However, I think the situation is all right. Let me give you an instance: there is a restaurant here that is known as Poppa Gar's [Poppa Gar is John Garland Miner. Born in 1907 in North Carolina, he has been a resident of Las Vegas since 1939.-ed.] He came down here and was a partner of Bob Baskin, who had a restaurant down on Main Street, just off the freeway. He was a westerner. After he left Bob Baskin's partnership, he opened a restaurant of his own. It's known as Poppa Gar's. He has had to put one addition onto his restaurant already, and he's thinking of putting another one on. If you've got enterprise and you've got a good product to offer, I think that you can succeed in business here. There have been hundreds, maybe thousands of people who have come in here with the same feeling that I had when I first came down here—that here is where the money is, and I'm going to make it. They've gone into business, and they've failed. It's been a blessing and it's been something else also. Whether it evens up, I'm not prepared to say.

The community feeling in Las Vegas has degenerated since the large corporations came in. During the time that the hotels were owned by individuals, they were cooperating in anything that the community wanted to do. During the seventy-fifth anniversary of the

birth of the city of Las Vegas, I was director of the committee that handled the celebration. I thought that it would take in the whole valley, because if it hadn't been for Las Vegas there wouldn't have been any Las Vegas as it stands today. I tried to get a date with the Resort Hotel Association to present the theory of the celebration. I never could get inside the door. They just weren't interested in anything that was Las Vegas. They said, "That's Las Vegas. That's the city of Las Vegas. That's not us." They just separated the 2 at Sahara Avenue. [Much of the Las Vegas Strip lies outside the city limits. Sahara Avenue is one of the boundaries.—ed.]

Even so, I don't regret that the large corporations have come to Las Vegas. It has added to the economy in the community. Certainly it has produced a great volume of tourists, because each hotel has an organization that promotes conventions and things for their hotels. If they get the conventions for the community, they've got a lot of tourists who come in here. Many of the hotels also have a year-round deal of sending brochures out to people who might be interested in developing interests in the community. I think that the hotels have contributed greatly to the publicity that the city has gotten and, as a result, has brought about a lot of these conventions and the tourists who have come here. There is being developed an idea now that Las Vegas should be a family place to play. They're building things such as Wet and Wild and the miniature golf course, which is just off the freeway, south of the center of the city. I think that that is going to catch on, and we will be able to handle families. I think that the hotels have been backers of that idea. The more families you bring up here, the more hotel rooms they fill.

We were a small community when I arrived, and you could be a big frog in a little

pond, but now you would be a little frog in a big pond because of the way the community has developed. It's more or less of a closed corporation as far as the corporate gambling is concerned. You don't have the opportunities that I had of starting things. When I came down here, there was nothing that had been started here. It was a railroad town and that was it. When I came down here there were opportunities, because nothing had been developed. Now the community has developed into a big city. As a result, you have the big city prohibitions against anybody like myself getting very far. You have to be really outstanding.

I think the spread of legalized gambling will have a tremendous impact on Las Vegas. Now you've got people from all over the East Coast and the Middle West who come in here. If you have gambling in New York State or in Florida or Texas or California, that would be the worst blow that we could suffer, because most of our trade comes from California. States are in a financial bind now, and they're looking for some way to pay off their bills. They think that gambling is the easiest way to do it. They look at the profits that are being made by all these hotels, and they say, "Well, let us get into the gambling business and rake off the cream." It's not that easy, because they're going to run into a lot of problems. Las Vegas over the years has solved most of the problems that have come up as a result of gambling.

When I was growing up, anybody who gambled was an outcast. I don't know whether it's as a result of the Nevada gambling, but the attitude towards gambling has changed completely, made a 360-degree revolution. It's accepted as the salvation of these people that are in dire straits because of the welfare state and all of these federal regulations that have been put on the states. I think that

they're going to find out, these people who want gambling established, that they're going to have to go through the same hassle that we had when gambling was first introduced into the state of Nevada. Las Vegas is so far ahead of anything that these new gambling establishments can put in that it will take 25, 50 years to catch up. Gambling in the state of Nevada has been, for half a century, fighting these problems as they came up. The state of Nevada is a sparsely populated state. There are only about 3 or 4 cities where gambling would be of any value at all: Las Vegas, Reno, Elko, Tonopah, maybe. Minden-Gardnerville at the base of the Sierra Nevada Mountains has got the overflow from Lake Tahoe. Las Vegas is so far ahead of these people. They're going to have an awful tough time catching up with the community as a gambling center, because it has been named the gambling center of the United States: "Sin City." How are the other people going to be able to criticize the state of Nevada when they are trying to do the same thing?

*In his book, Forty Days in the Wilderness, James Hulse, a professor at Reno, has been very critical of the state. He has argued that Nevada is a state without a conscience, because Nevada has sold out to gambling interests.*

I know James Hulse very well, and he criticized me several times in one of his books. I remember it hurt, and then I forgot about it. However, Hulse is one of those boys who is sitting in the ivory tower looking down at what he sees below. The things that he sees below, I believe, do not give him any faith or liking in what he sees. I think James Hulse is a minority of one who feels the way he does about gambling. I don't think that there's any reason to his comment that we've sold out to gambling. Sure, gambling has contributed a

great deal to the community. Maybe James Hulse ought to go up to a couple of sessions at the legislature and see what they think of gambling. It would change his mind, I'm sure.

Jim is kind of a peculiar sort of a guy. In talking to him, he just rubs me especially the wrong way. He's got a lot of funny ideas. His idea on gambling is one of them. I haven't sold out to the gamblers, and I know a lot of other people in the state of Nevada who haven't either.

True Nevadans have certain ideas and values. People who came across the plains and suffered were people you could depend on. You could depend on their word. You could depend on their work, if they were working for you. They had the basics. They were taught the basics of living when they were crossing the plains, because that was no easy thing to do. The people who established the state of Nevada in the north were the types of people who came across the plains in those wagons. They had the benefit of the natural barriers and knew that you wouldn't be able to get by if you were lying. They were true people.

The people who settled southern Nevada were an entirely different outfit. It was established originally by the Mormons. There were a great many of those Mormons who had the difficulties of reaching a destination which they chose. Anybody who has driven the road between here and Salt Lake City in the early days knows the obstacles that these people overcame. They became welded together, more or less. They acted and thought the same way that their companions did, and that brought about honesty and integrity. They were small groups and they knew everybody who was in the train that they were traveling in. The same thing developed in the northern part of the state.

A true Nevadan to me is a man who has a conscience. He believes in what his conscience

tells him. He is not especially religious; he has some religion. I am sure that they believed in God. It's only through God's good graces that they made the trips that they did across the plains, because that was dynamite! I am especially blessed by the fact that I knew some of the people who did come across the plains—my grandfather. My grandfather always preached that if you shook hands on a deal, it was a deal. You didn't have to dot the i's and cross the t's and write a 5-page summary of what the law said. If you didn't abide by it, the hell with you. He just kicked them out of his association. They have a deep-seated love for the state of Nevada. They have broken the desert; they have mined the hills and mountains, and they know what nature can provide for the industrious people. Now they have progeny who are not the type of people that you would want to associate with, a lot of them. My father used to tell me when I was growing up that what the city of Reno needed for progress was a few funerals. Well, they've had the funerals. The kids have come along and taken over the property that they owned. The pioneers who came in here didn't want their kids to suffer the same problems that they had.

The state cannot keep its character with a huge number of people coming in from outside. It's losing it already. I am very interested in the development of the room over at the Historical Society that the Junior League has dedicated to my late wife. They have got some very, very interesting pictures and interesting history there. The local people don't seem to care what it was like then. They all want to know what it's going to do for them now. The enthusiasm for the state of Nevada is degenerating. Yet, you take Nellis Air Force Base. It has had many commanders. They have been here from 4 years to 6 months. A lot of them have told me that they have traveled all

over the world. They have had an opportunity to retire anywhere they wanted to, and they've come to Las Vegas to retire. There are more and more who are doing that.

Many new arrivals were not brought up with the terrific handicaps that faced their parents. They don't have any great attachment to the land itself. I think that the middle westerners probably are a better example of those close to the thinking of the people in Nevada. You get on the East Coast and talk to people back there, and they think that the United States ends at the west side of the Harlem River. That's as far as they've gotten. They haven't had any of this broad expanse of freedom, not only in the laws, but freedom to breathe and have elbow room.

Let me cite you an example: I was back in Washington some time ago. There was a young man—I think he was from Boston. He was convinced, as far as the United States was concerned, they don't have any reason to have 51 states in the United States or representatives in the Congress, that Arizona, New Mexico, Idaho, Montana and Nevada should have one senator, the same as they've got in the senate in the state of Nevada now. What they don't realize is that there is an entirely different type of thinking and an entirely different way of governing in the various states that they want to combine. They want the East Coast to control the entire United States.

As far as the influx of people here, it's changed the entire complexion of Las Vegas and Clark County—southern Nevada. We have more culture in the community now than we had back in the days when I first came down here. We have newer and possibly bigger ideas. We've just expanded out to a point where the old-timers and the people who built the various communities in the state are squashed out of the picture. To my thinking, it is something that I regret.

There is the core of a community still here in Las Vegas—the Cashmans, the Cahlans, the Joneses, the McDermotts. I could take you out to a meeting of the Civilian-Military Council, which is a liaison group that gets together every quarter for the betterment of the community and the betterment of Nellis Air Force Base. Those are the kinds of people who I would say are still here and still believe that Las Vegas is the best place in the world to live.

When you are still a small town, you know everybody else. You know what they're thinking about, and you know that their ideas are not to rip off everybody who you meet, but to cooperate in making your community a more solid community. The honesty of these people who come in here is not what it used to be when I was a kid growing up. I've known hundreds of people who have come in here as immigrants, who, when they first came here, just hated the place. There's nothing to do; there's no cohesion to what is happening in the community. They leave, and they're gone for a year or 2, maybe 5. Suddenly, they come back to the city of Las Vegas because they say there's no place like Las Vegas to live.

We've got a lot going for us that nobody else has got. I think that the openness that we were just talking about is still here, if they would take advantage of it! But the majority of the people who come in here have got their jobs; they've got their nose to the grindstone, and they just don't see what's going on around them.

I won't say that newcomers have become Nevadans. I will say that their attitudes of life change a great deal because of their residence in the city of Las Vegas and the contact that they've had, on occasion, with true Nevadans.

It gives me pleasure to come in over the mountains at night in an airplane and look down and see the glitter of a community that

I helped to develop. I'm very proud of the fact that I was in a position to do what I did. Who else in the United States—in the Middle West or in the East, for that matter—would be able to meet 5 presidents, to call by name the senators and congressmen from the state of Nevada, to know them and know their families for a long time, and to know that I made some little contribution to the growth?

The growth sometimes scares me, because if it continues on, I don't know what you're going to do for water, police protection and the taxes that you've got to pay. There is nothing that I can do to stop it. It displeases me, because you don't get the intimate feelings that you have in a community of 50,000 people. If you go back to New York and any of those big communities back there, the people who live in these condominiums or apartment houses don't even know their neighbors. Here you have an opportunity, if you want to, to know the so-called big shots of Las Vegas and call them by their first name, if you are respected.

I would like to see Las Vegas today a more friendly community, like it used to be. When anybody came in here from the outside, they were welcomed and greeted. People from 4 houses, 5 houses down the street would come up with some cookies or a loaf of bread and say, "We want to welcome you to the community." You don't get that very much any more. People are not as friendly as they used to be. It's not peculiar to Las Vegas; it's any big community.

I think the United States has lost its sense of values. Look at what has happened to the last 20 or 30 years. We've had a president resign. It's the worst thing that could happen to a community or a government. The president resigned because he wasn't honest with the people. All of this investigation that's going on now of President Reagan—

criticizing his honesty and integrity. I'm not in a position to know whether Reagan knows about these things or not, but here's a man who everybody's shooting at. Anybody who gets elected to govern the United States, the states or the county are always criticized. I think that's one reason you are not getting good people to run for the various offices. They just won't take that criticism; I know I wouldn't. I know other people who have been in public office who have taken that criticism just as long as they could and then resigned. I think that all the problems that have developed in the city, county, state and federal governments have been a result of people having nothing else to do but criticize. There is an old saying that comes from the early days: "Don't criticize a man until you have walked 5 miles in his moccasins."



I don't want to sound egotistical, but I was quite active in the development of Las Vegas. I was one of the founders of the Elks Helldorado celebration, mainly because I was in the newspaper business and could give them publicity. As it went on I became more and more involved, and then I joined the Elks Lodge and became Exalted Ruler. As a result, I was in charge of the Helldorado the year that I was Exalted Ruler. I was one of the 3 founders of the Junior Chamber of Commerce and was very active in promoting anything that would be of benefit to the community.

I was one of the founders of the minor league baseball team that was brought in here by two fellows by the name of Kimball and Powers. They brought in the Sunset League, which was composed of teams in California and Mexico and Arizona and Nevada. That was a start. We used to play ball where the city hall is now. It was the first minor league ball team in the state of Nevada. It's developed into what is now Cashman Field in the Cashman complex. That was developed out of the baseball team. At the time I was one of the

few people who had the time and desire to do good for the city of Las Vegas.

I think that my parents were too close to the forest to see the trees, but they always prided themselves on the fact that I was doing these things. Before I left Reno, my father told me, "Now, son, you're going down to a new community, and you establish yourself by every time you see somebody, smile at them and say, 'Good morning' or 'Hello.'" I tried to follow that advice, and it worked.

I think my parents were surprised at my success more in the later years than they were with Al's. Al was an idea man. He was a maneuverer. He wanted to be the man in the background to get people elected and was very interested in politics. As a result he made many enemies. Being on the newspaper and being the only newspaper in town from the early years, they blamed everything that was wrong with the newspaper on him. He wasn't responsible; I was the guy who was responsible. I was more gregarious than Al was. Al was a private man. He was an idea man, and his ideas sometimes conflicted with

a lot of his friends. He was quite active in the development of the city of Las Vegas, as I was.

My father died just after I came to Las Vegas. He had recognized more than my mother what I had done in Reno. I was founder of the 20-30 Club in Reno. The 20-30 Club was an organization much the same as the Junior Chamber of Commerce. It was confined to people between the ages of 20 and 30, and that was about the age that the Junior Chamber of Commerce had in their constitution. When I came down here, I became more interested in the Junior Chamber of Commerce than the 20-30 Club. The 20-30 Club kind of died out because of the Junior Chamber of Commerce.

In Reno I also was one of the charter members of the DeMolay organization, which was a Masonic group composed of sons and grandsons of Masons. My father was a Mason, and I was always interested in the Masonic Lodge; I thought that it was one of the better organizations. That was when I was growing up. Now I am a thirty-second degree Mason, and I haven't attended a Masonic Lodge meeting in the past 50 years, mainly because I've forgotten all the ritual that you were supposed to know. I joined the Masonic Lodge when I was working on the *Journal* in Reno. I did not have the best coach in the world to teach me the tenets of the Masonic Lodge. As a result, I lost some of my enthusiasm. Also, I was working nights, so I never could attend any of their meetings. I don't guess that I have been in a lodge quarters more than 5 times in my entire lifetime as a Mason. I regret it at times, because I know that they do good, but the circumstances didn't allow me to go to the meetings, therefore I couldn't get too enthused about it.

There was a Christian Science group down here, and my mother was one of the members.

Florence's mother was also active in the church. I would say that they were founders. My cousin, Mrs. Gladys Luce, became very, very active in the Christian Science church. I think she was one of the originators of the idea of building the Christian Science church here. I would say that the original group was maybe 25 at the most. There were a few men, but mostly women. They met at different houses in the early days of the city, and then they met in the Elks Lodge for quite some time.

I wouldn't say that Florence was a member of that group. She was a member of the mother church in Boston, and she attended the church services here, but she wasn't exactly what you would call a religious zealot. She'd go when she had time. A lot of the tenets of the Christian Science church remained with her all her life. I never, never attended the Christian Science church here. I wasn't able to do some things, because I was so darned busy doing other things that needed to be done for the newspaper. It didn't make any difference whether it was Sunday or Thursday. The church never bothered me, and I didn't bother the church.

After quitting my job at the Review-Journal I didn't know where I was going or what I was going to do. No money was coming in. I was just despondent. My mother-in-law, who was a devout Christian Scientist, gave me a book that Ernest Holmes had written. [Holmes was a metaphysician whose thinking was roughly similar to that of Christian Science. In 1949 he founded the Church of Religious Science. *Science of the Mind*, Holmes's most important book, was published in 1938. Holmes died in 1960.—ed.] Reading the book, he quoted Mary Baker Eddy voluminously, and he had thoughts of how the Christian Science dogma could differ in a way that would better the people

who believed in it. It looked to me like that was the answer that I was seeking, so I joined the church.

My brother was on the church board. I think he was president of the church board at that time. It was not because of my brother that I joined the church. A lot of people figured that I joined the church because of Al. He had no influence on me whatever, as far as my religious beliefs were concerned. Al was more active in religion than I was. I don't know that he was a real active Christian Scientist, but he knew more about the Christian Science religion than I did.

Florence was not active in this Church of Religious Science. She never strayed away from her Christian Science teaching. She was a very devout Christian Scientist. She lived the life of a Christian Scientist, because she was honest and fair and had few enemies. A very few people disliked her. She was one of the most respected and revered women in the whole valley during her time. She was sort of a mother confessor to most of the women in the valley, which at that time was not as large as it is now. She saved a lot of souls.

My parents were much more impressed by my brother's accomplishments than they were by mine. I knew that by the way they treated my brother and the way they treated me. I don't say that about my father, because he treated us both pretty much alike, but my mother was very partial to my brother, I guess because he was the firstborn. However, my mother got convinced after I'd been down here 2 or 3 years, and she saw what was going on. She came down here to teach school after my father died, and then she was continually telling me how proud she was of what I'd done.

My mother lived with Florence before Florence and I were married. She lived in the Waite Apartments, which were over on Fourth

and Bridger streets. Then she moved in with Florence or Florence moved in with her. I've forgotten which way it was. Anyway, they lived together until my mother died.

I think that probably the good Lord was looking after me when I was severed from the Nevada State Journal in Reno and came to Las Vegas. Had I remained in Reno, I don't think that I ever would have accomplished what I have accomplished down here, for the main reason that Las Vegas was 3 years younger than I when I came down here. It was a growing community, and I had an opportunity to join in the development of Las Vegas. It was something that was very pleasing to me. Because of my job with the newspaper, I was into practically all areas of the community. I had many opportunities, not to advise, but to put forth some ideas that developed into things in the community. A lot of things were my ideas but were given to another group so that they could put them in effect. I was very active in the initial part of the Nellis Air Force Base.

I often stop and think what would've happened had I remained in Reno. I always probably would have been the son of Bert Cahlan to all the oldtimers up there and would have had no opportunity to get into the middle of the political and social activities as I did down here. If I'd remained in Reno I probably would have wound up as a copy reader on the Nevada State Journal, having been there for 25,30 years. Coming to Las Vegas was a step that I never will regret.

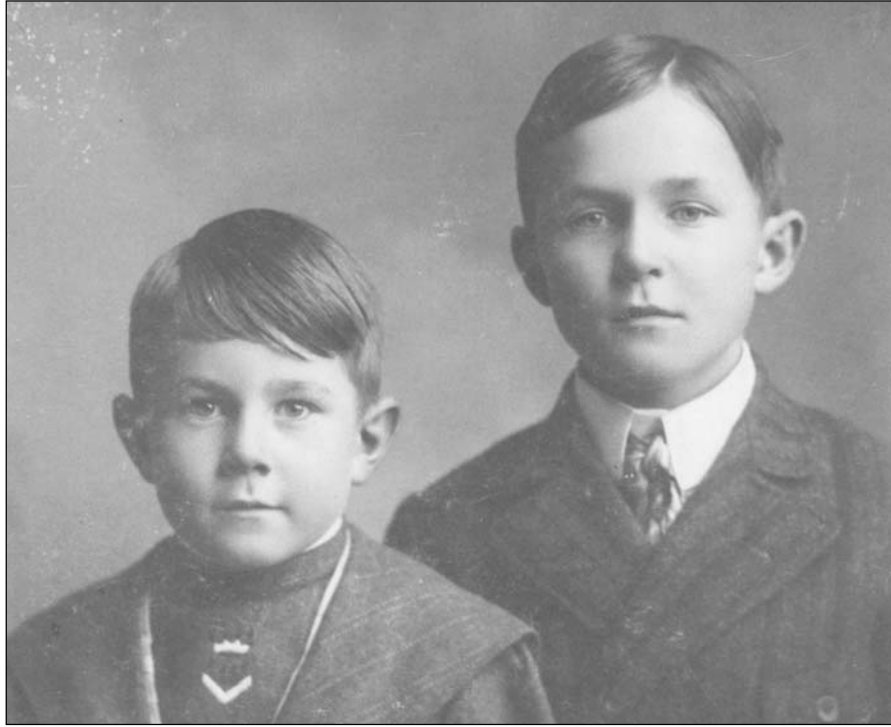


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## PHOTOGRAPHS



Marion Cahlan, 1898.



John and Albert Cahlan, ca. 1907.



First Helldorado, 1935. Helldorado Queen on a burro in Apache Bar. l to r: Bert Testolini, Eddie De Pew, Pat Gallagher, Bud Bodell, Louise De Flour (Helldorado Queen), and John Cahlan in foreground.





John Cahlan and Ria Gable, ca. 1939, as she thanks the Junior Chamber of Commerce for the courtesies extended to her during her stay in Las Vegas.



Las Vegas in the 1940s, looking east down Fremont Street.  
The railroad station (now the site of the Plaza Hotel) is in the foreground.



Election night activity at the Review-Journal, 1945. l to r: Berkeley Bunker, Carl Woodbury, Florence Lee Jones, unidentified, Raymond Germain, A. E. Cahlan, Frank Garside.



Atomic bomb watchers with "Bomb Cake," early 1950s. l to r: Benny Goffstein, Bob Considine, John Cahlan.





Florence Lee Jones Cahlan and John F. Cahlan at home, 1947.



The John Cahlan house at 1600 West Charleston Blvd. in Las Vegas, 1949.

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## A

Adams, Eva, 182, 428  
Adcock and Ronnow (department store, Las Vegas), 99  
Albright, George "Bud," 289  
Aisup, Ralph, 257-258  
Ancient Order of Atomic Bomb Watchers, 402  
Archives, Nevada state, 437, 438  
Arnett, Leonard, 117, 119, 120, 121, 123-124, 126  
Ashby, George, 281

## B

Baker, C. D., 234, 235, 375, 377  
Barron, Ballard, 349  
Basic Magnesium, Incorporated (BMI), 171, 187, 202-218, 256  
Bible, Alan, 205, 259, 428-429, 431  
Biltz, Norm, 422-424  
Blad, Gus, 94  
Block 16 (Las Vegas), 101, 136, 144, 192, 225  
Bodell, Bud, 157-159, 175  
Boggs, Ray, 81-82  
Bonanza Village (Las Vegas), 237-238  
Boosters Club, University of Nevada, 242-243  
Booth, Libby C., 35-36, 38  
Borax, Don, 98-99, 106  
Boulder City, Nevada, 145, 153, 155-159, 170, 419  
*Boulder City Journal*, 134-135  
Boulder Club (Las Vegas), 308  
Boulder Dam. See Hoover Dam  
Bracken, Walter, 112, 152, 449  
Brown, Robert, 365  
Brown Derby Cafe (Las Vegas), 221

Bunker, Berkeley, 210, 412-413, 415  
Busick, Bill, 165-167, 177-178, 187, 188

## C

Cahill, Robbins, 355, 359-360  
Cahlan, Albert E. (brother of John F.), 6, 12, 21-22, 28, 31, 37-38, 40, 42, 43, 61, 65, 70, 83-85, 89-90, 92-93, 109, 110, 111, 114, 120-121, 123, 124, 126, 134, 161, 163, 166-167, 178-179, 182-183, 184, 185, 186, 203, 216, 217-218, 234-235, 257, 259, 260, 263, 268, 270-271, 307, 308, 326, 356, 357, 359, 361, 364, 366, 373, 375, 377, 378, 405, 406, 410, 411-416, 417-419, 425-427, 428-429, 431, 433, 472, 474-475  
Cahlan, Albert W. (father of John F.), 4, 5-6, 7, 8-9, 11, 12-17, 18, 20, 23-30, 42, 54, 55, 61, 65, 67, 68, 75, 80, 81, 466, 471, 475  
Cahlan, Florence Lee (nee Jones, second wife of John F.), 22, 89, 91-92, 114, 135, 137, 155, 156-157, 163, 173-174, 175-176, 179, 180, 182, 184, 231-232, 233, 285, 309, 371-372, 375, 426-427, 431-434, 447, 473-474  
Cahlan, John F.: as alternate municipal court judge, 147-149; ancestors, 1-5, 16, 21; birth, 5; childhood and youth, 4, 5-12, 19, 20-64; education, 26-27, 34, 65-76; employment (to 1929), 28, 32, 33, 67-68, 77-78, 80; as executive



director of SNIF, 297-300, 302-303; as juvenile officer, 130-133; life in Las Vegas, 95, 447-456, 457-470; marriages, 78, 173-174; move to Las Vegas, 81-83, 85-86; and nuclear testing, 389-404; religion, 20-23; at the *Review Journal*, 86-93, 114, 120, 122, 129, 153, 161, 173, 174-186, 251, 256, 361-376, 381, 389-404, 416; sports and athletics, 22, 25, 32, 35, 37, 38-39, 66-67, 88, 471; as a University of Nevada Regent, 239-255

Cahlan, Julia (nee Klinge, first wife of John F.), 78, 85, 97-98

Cahlan, Marion E. (mother of John F.), 4, 5-6, 8-9, 10, 12, 16, 17-22, 23-31, 38, 40-41, 42, 53, 54, 64, 65, 67, 68, 70, 81, 83, 173, 475

Cahlan, Virginia (daughter of John F.), 97

Cannon, Howard, 441-444

Carville, E. P., 270, 412-414, 419

Cashman, James, 85, 94, 99, 109-110, 111, 112, 127-128, 260, 262, 263, 268-269, 313-314, 369

Casino gambling. *See* Gambling, casino

Central Labor Council of Las Vegas, 162, 163

Chamber of Commerce, Las Vegas, 113, 115, 116, 121, 164-165, 166, 179, 191, 196, 198, 200, 201-202, 209, 212, 230, 267, 269, 274, 276-277, 278, 280-281, 283, 284, 290, 291, 294, 295, 302, 309, 312-313, 322, 327, 333, 339, 356, 434, 435-436, 448

Chamber of Commerce, Westside, 229, 230

Charleston Boulevard (Las Vegas), 447

Charleston, Mount, 96, 116, 180

Christian Science, 20-23, 473-474

CIO (Congress of Industrial Organizations), 256-257

Clark, Ed W., 105, 108-109, 110, 112, 117-118, 120, 123, 126, 152, 205, 257, 259, 260, 268, 276, 325-327, 408, 412, 415

Clark, Wilbur, 333-334, 336, 376

*Clark County Review*, 84

Collins, Frank, 80

Colorado River Commission, 203, 205-206, 207

Conlon, Jack, 245

Cook, Henry, 224

Corkhill, C. C., 84

Cornero, Tony, 138-140

Cragin, Ernie, 118-119, 120, 169, 187-188, 234-235

Crowe, Frank, 156

Culinary workers union, Las Vegas, 258, 265

## D

Dalitz, Moe, 334-335

Dann, Fred, 53

Dashiell, Doug, 248

Dat-so-la-lee, 48

Democratic Party, 92, 109, 110, 111, 134, 230, 231, 232, 257, 259, 261-262, 263, 270, 378, 405, 419, 429-430, 431-434, 446

Desert Inn (hotel and casino, Las Vegas), 333-337

Desert Sea News Bureau, 281, 285-286, 288

Down, James H., 122

## E

Earl, Marion, 274

Eells, Howard, 203, 205, 206-207, 209-210, 211, 216

Elks Lodge, Las Vegas, 114, 115, 116, 135, 136

El Portal (Las Vegas), 102, 118, 169

El Rancho (hotel and casino,  
Las Vegas), 227, 308, 315-  
319, 324

Ely, Sims, 156-157

Ensley, Boysie, 225, 229

## F

Fair Employment Practices  
Commission (FEPC), 216-218,  
256

Flamingo (hotel and casino, Las  
Vegas), 268, 327-333, 334

Foley, Roger R., 378-379

Foley, Thomas, 133

Fraternities, 40-42, 58, 70-73,  
74-75

Freighting, 1-2

Fremont Street (Las Vegas), 94,  
99, 286, 291, 315, 338-340

Frohlich, August, 33

Fyhen, Ragnald, 159, 162-163

## G

Gable, Ria, 121, 309-310

Gambling, 49-50, 201-202, 287,  
299-300, 306-344, 460-465

Gambling, casino, 201-202, 306-  
344, 460-465

Garside, Frank F., 84-85, 134,  
182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 361

German, William, 124-125

Gilbert, C. V. T. "Chet," 223

Goffstein, Benny, 348

Golden Nugget (hotel and  
casino, Las Vegas), 339

Goldfield, Nevada, 13, 14

Gorman, Charles, 241-243

Gragson, Oran K., 236-237

Grant, Archie, 110, 112, 259

Greenspun, Herman M. "Hank,"  
354-356, 364, 375, 376-388

Griffith, R. E., 319, 320, 323,  
326

Griffith, Robert "Bob," 113,  
121, 187, 190, 191, 277, 296,  
312, 339

Gusewell, Frank, 94, 110, 111

## H

Hanley, Tom, 257-258

Hannigan, Steve, 180, 281-283,  
288, 291, 300

Harlem Club (Las Vegas), 180-  
181

Harmon, Harley A., 110, 115

Hecht, Chic, 443-444

Helldorado celebration (Las  
Vegas), 116, 135, 314-315,  
339-340

Henderson, Nevada, 203, 208,  
214-215, 272-273

Hermits (Reno), 59

Hicks, Marion, 335

Hoggard, Dave, 231

Hoggard, Mabel, 231

Hoover Dam (also known as  
Boulder Dam), 86, 96, 127,  
143-144, 145, 154-156, 159,  
167, 170

Hughes, Howard, 301-302, 303-  
305

Hull, Tommy, 227, 308, 315-318,  
319, 326

Hulse, James W., 464-465

## I

Indian domestic help, 7-8

Indians, 7-8, 37, 46, 104

Industrial Workers of the World  
(IWW), 13, 14, 16, 159-161,  
163

International Typesetting Union  
(ITU), 368-376

## J

Jeffries-Johnson fight (1910),  
53-56

John Birch Society, 421-422

Jones, Clifford, 350-351, 354-  
355, 357, 375-376, 377

Junior Chamber of Commerce,  
Las Vegas, 116-117, 121, 185,  
200-201, 202, 289

Justi, William "Rags," 80



## K

Kaltenborn, Robert, 99, 121, 412  
 Kefauver, Estes, 345-346, 353  
 Kefauver Committee, 345-346, 348, 350-351, 353-354, 355  
 Kelch, Maxwell, 274, 275-276, 277, 278, 280, 283, 294, 295  
 Kleinman, Morris, 335  
 Koontz, John, 438

## L

Labor, organized, 13, 14, 15, 16, 92-93, 128, 159-167, 256-266, 368-376  
 Lamb, Floyd, 437, 439, 440-441  
 Lansky, Meyer, 355  
 Last Frontier (hotel and casino, Las Vegas), 226, 227, 319-324, 349  
 Las Vegas, Nevada (1929-1960s), 85-86; black community, 101-103, 104-105, 167-170, 180-181, 195, 211, 213-217, 219-238; commerce, 98-100, 105, 106, 127, 144, 153, 194, 209, 223, 227, 461-463; divorce as an industry in, 306, 308-312; entertainment, 102, 135-142, 196, 226-227; housing, 95, 96, 144-145, 168, 170-172, 190, 208, 213, 222-223, 224, 237; Indian community, 104, 105; Jewish community, 106-108, 387; law enforcement, 146-149, 151, 193, 219-220; medical care and facilities, 97, 229; Mexican community, 103, 104; municipal power, 117-126; organized crime in, 139, 267, 287, 299, 311, 327-338, 345-350, 352; organized religion in, 99, 103, 105-106, 107-108, 114-115, 169, 220, 230, 307, 310, 473-474; physicians (see medical care and facilities); politics and government, 89-90, 92-93, 105, 108-126, 151-152, 172, 187-190, 230-233, 258-260, 267, 301, 322, 379, 383, 386, 405, 409, 421-422, 425, 431-434, 459-460; schools, 228, 229; social divisions, 100, 101-108, 168-170, 195, 196, 212, 213-214, 219-229, 237-238, 298; sports and recreation, 102, 135; water supply, 205-206, 447-456  
*Las Vegas Age*, 121, 133-134, 160-161  
*Las Vegas Evening Review*, 85  
*Las Vegas Free Press*, 370, 374  
*Las Vegas Land and Water Company*, 112, 448  
*Las Vegas News Bureau*, 291  
*Las Vegas Review-Journal*, 86-93, 114, 120, 121, 122, 126, 129, 134, 153, 160-161, 163, 164, 165, 173, 174-186, 191, 197, 215, 216, 217, 235, 251, 256, 261, 279, 285, 286, 290, 295, 307, 332-333, 334, 354, 361-376, 377, 380-381, 382, 383, 384-385, 386, 388, 416, 418, 425, 428, 433  
*Las Vegas Sun*, 235, 261, 355-356, 376, 377, 381  
 Lattin, Ralph, 357-359  
 Lawson, Sam, 124  
 Laxalt, Paul, 444-446  
 Leavitt, Myron, 133  
 Lewis, Maxine, 317, 321  
 Live Wire Fund, 278-280, 294  
 Love, Malcolm, 244-247, 250-251

## M

McAfee, Guy, 338-339  
 McCants, Arthur, 168-169  
 McCarran, Patrick, 111, 197, 198, 205, 218, 232-233, 258-259, 273, 368, 375, 377-380, 413, 414, 416-422, 428, 429-430, 431  
 McCarthy, Joseph, 381, 421  
 McDonald, Joe, 77  
 McGinty, Thomas, 335  
 McKechnie, Fred W., Jr., 78, 80

Mackay, Claude, 127  
 McNamee, Frank, 309  
 McNeill, Larry, 204, 216  
 McNeill Construction Company,  
 204  
 McWilliams, J. T., 100  
 Malone, George W. "Molly,"  
 184, 429-430  
 Martin, Anne, 18-19  
 Martin, Roy, 86, 94  
 Mary S. Doten School (Reno),  
 57  
 Meadows, The (Las Vegas),  
 138-140  
 Mechling, Tom, 259, 350, 428-  
 429, 431  
 Mendoza, John, 133  
 Mesquite Club (Las Vegas), 136  
 Mesta, Perle, 430  
 Mines and mining, 13-15  
 Moore, William, 227, 270, 296,  
 320-324, 342-343  
 Mormons, 99, 104-106, 108-109,  
 115, 307, 329-330  
 Morris, W. C., 161-162  
 Moseley, John, 241-243  
 Mount Rose School (Reno), 57  
 Murphy, Gene, 336

## N

Nellis Air Force Base, 187, 188,  
 190-202, 219-220  
 Nevada Centennial Commission,  
 438, 439  
*Nevada State Journal*, 33, 39,  
 54, 69, 77-78  
 North Las Vegas, Nevada, 100  
 Northwestern Athletic Club  
 (Reno), 40-42, 46, 58  
 Nuclear testing, 389-404  
 Nuclear Test Site (Nye County,  
 Nevada), 389-404

## O

Orvis Ring School (Reno), 35-  
 36, 38, 56

## P

Panama-Pacific International  
 Exposition, 31  
 Payne, Don, 291  
 Pike, William, 118  
 Pipkin, Charles, 385-386  
 Pittman, Key, 111, 411-412  
 Pittman, Vall, 232, 424-425, 426  
 Platt, Sam, 15  
 Police, Nevada state, 13, 14, 15  
 Progressive Party, 230  
 Prohibition, 63-64, 73-75  
 Prostitution, 50-52, 136-139,  
 144, 192-194

## Q

Questa, Eddie, 424

## R

Regan, Neil, 281, 283, 285-286  
 Regents, University of Nevada  
 Board of, 185, 239-255  
 Reno, Nevada (1905-1929), 1-2,  
 43-53, 56-64, 78-81; amuse-  
 ments, 11, 28-29, 35, 42-43,  
 49-56, 58-61, 63-64, 73, 74-  
 75; Basque community, 49;  
 black community, 47-48;  
 Chinese community, 9, 46, 47,  
 49-50; commerce, 9, 33, 42,  
 45, 53, 67; gambling in, 306-  
 307; German community, 47;  
 Indian community, 37, 46;  
 Italian community, 46-47;  
 Jewish community, 48-49;  
 labor, organized, 16, 17;  
 newspapers, 16, 33, 39, 54,  
 69, 77-78, 80; organized  
 religion in, 20-22; politics  
 and government, 33, 79-80;  
 schools, 34, 35, 36, 38-39,  
 40-41, 56; social divisions, 7,  
 12, 43, 46, 49, 52, 56-57, 58-  
 61; sports and recreation, 9,  
 11, 22, 46, 53-56, 60, 69-70;  
 streetcars, 10-11



*Reno Evening Gazette*, 33, 80  
Reno High School, 40-41, 57,  
58, 70  
Republican Party, 15, 16, 134,  
268, 270, 405, 446  
Resort Hotel Association, 294  
Reynolds, Don, 251, 361-370,  
372-374  
Right-to-work legislation, 258,  
261, 263-266  
Roberts, Ed, 79  
Roosevelt, Eleanor, 217  
Roosevelt, Franklin D., 127,  
217-218  
Ross, Si, 241-242, 249-250  
Rotary Club, Las Vegas, 115,  
116  
Ruckman, Andy, 297  
Rudiak, George, 235-236  
Russell, Charles, 425, 426-427  
Russell, John, 117, 119, 120,  
121, 126, 187-190, 383  
Russell, Robert, 274-275

## S

*Sagebrush*, 68, 73, 84  
Sampson, Dewey, 37  
Sands (hotel and casino, Las  
Vegas), 228  
Scott, Frank, 443  
Scrugham, James, 78, 80, 410-  
411  
Sedway, Moe, 267, 332  
Senate Bill (SB) 92, 356-359  
Sheeketski, Joe, 244  
Siegel, Benjamin "Bugsy," 267,  
327-333, 338, 376, 387  
Sing, Hughie, 36-37  
Six Companies, 153, 155-156,  
159, 164  
Smith, Eugenia Claire, 231-232,  
433-434  
Sousev, (first name unknown),  
177-178  
Southern Nevada Industrial  
Foundation (SNIF), 264, 292,  
296-300, 302-303  
Sparks, John W., 13, 15  
Springmeyer, George, 79  
Squires, Charles, 133-134

Star Bar (Las Vegas), 221  
Stout, Minard W., 251  
Strassburg, Fred, 33  
Strip, the (Las Vegas), 141,  
226-228, 267-268, 292, 296,  
315-338, 339-342, 397

## T

Tax Commission, Nevada, 342-  
342-343, 356, 359-360  
Taylor, Zack, 443  
Thatcher, George, 79  
Thomas, Parry, 269, 326  
Thompson, J. Walter (advertis-  
ing agency), 180, 280-281  
Thunderbird (hotel and casino,  
Las Vegas), 354, 355  
Truman, Harry S., 210-211, 407  
Tucker, Sam, 335  
Twentieth Century Club (Reno),  
57

## U

Ullom, George, 450-451  
University of Nevada, 46, 56,  
59-61, 65-76, 240-254  
U-Wah-Un Club (Las Vegas),  
136

## V

Valley Bank (Las Vegas), 326  
Van, Garwood, 317  
Vaughn, Erastus Otis, 40-41  
Virginia City, Nevada, 1-2, 3

## W

Washoe County Building Trades  
Council, 16, 17  
Westside (Las Vegas), 100-101,  
132-133, 144, 149, 167, 180,  
214, 219, 221-225, 228-234,  
236-238, 383-384, 386  
Wingfield, George, 14, 79, 81,  
249-250, 408, 417

Wobblies. *See* Industrial  
Workers of the World)  
Women's suffrage, 18-20  
Woodburn, William, 79  
Wynn, Steve, 339

XYZ

Young, Walker, 156

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